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Rebellion in the Unions

A HANDBOOK FOR
RANK AND FILE
ACTION

George Morris

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About the Author

GEORGE MORRIS has covered the labor movement as a reporter, commentator and author of books and pamphlets for almost four decades. As editor of the *Western Worker* from 1932 through 1934, he was both reporter and participant in the wave of West Coast farm struggles of that period and in the historic maritime and San Francisco General Strike of 1934. Starting as reporter for the *Daily Worker* late in 1934, Morris was from 1935 to 1937 its Michigan correspondent and took an active part in the strikes of that period climaxing with the famed sit-down at General Motors plants in Flint.

For most of Morris' 34 years with the *Daily Worker* and *The Worker*, he was its labor editor. He has been with the *Daily Worker* since its establishment in 1968 and continues currently as its labor columnist. He has been a familiar figure at labor conventions and other labor events for many years and holds the record as the longest sustained reporter and commentator on trade union affairs in the country. His regular column began in 1944. He is author of some two score pamphlets on labor here and abroad. Following trips to the Soviet Union and other socialist lands, he made a study of unions under socialism which he summarized in *What I Saw in the Soviet Union*, in 1959, and in *The USSR Today: 50 Years of Socialism*, in 1967. His first book, *American Labor: Which Way?* appeared in 1961. In 1967 he wrote *CIA and American Labor* which since then has been translated and published in about a dozen countries.

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TO LAURA AND VICKI

INTRODUCTION

Why did I write this book? Because in the recent period, along with the general popular discontent and restlessness in the country, we see a rising spirit of rank and file rebellion in the trade unions. The trend has been evident for some time. Old-line labor leaders, heading long-entrenched bureaucracies, complain that running a union their traditional way isn't as easy as it used to be. Some of these union presidents were toppled from their thrones.

The unions are becoming younger in average age level. Young people streaming into shops and unions bring some of the rebellious spirit of the college campuses. Black and Spanish-speaking workers, the youth especially, bring the militancy of the liberation movement. Caucuses of black workers in many unions and shops are pressing for equality on the job and in the unions.

After a long delay, the peace movement has crashed into the unions, adding to the progressive content of the developing rebellion. "We've had it!" was the headline across a page-size ad for an end of the Indochina war, signed by more than 450 union leaders, in the *San Francisco Chronicle* May 18, 1970. The war's consequences in the form of inflation and a slide-back in living standards for millions, the continued rotting of the cities as \$72 billions go for military budgets annually, with our sick society getting sicker, are moving the masses of working people to denounce both the war and the policy of stagnation of the men who occupy the seats of power in the AFL-CIO.

A strike movement continues at a very high level. "Wildcat" strikes were never so widespread. Some major strikes stretch as long as four, six and nine months. Workers are angry. The rate of voting down agreements negotiated by leaders is the highest on record.

So apparent is the bankruptcy of the AFL-CIO's top leadership in face of new problems and the crisis in the unions that whole sections of the 19-million-member trade union movement are reflecting the pressure for a change. The most significant pressure for a revitalized union movement comes from the rank and file.

Much of this rank and file trend takes organized forms. The workers are increasingly relying on their own strength, initiative and militant vigor to force action on their problems. There is a leftward trend. Large numbers are questioning old policies on fundamental grounds. The demand is strong for new approaches to problems and for a renovation of leadership.

Most significant is the new emphasis on the struggle against rac-

ism. The shameful fact that many leaders of unions can still practice discrimination, or close their eyes to it, and hold key positions of power within the AFL-CIO, is the clearest evidence of the federation's bankruptcy. Today we witness the rise of a more advanced unity of white, black and brown for eradication of all forms of racism whether on the job, in the community or within the union.

There is no uniformity in either program or form of the rank and file movement. As can be expected, all sorts of long-discredited ultra-left groups mask themselves with a new image in an effort to attract some of this immense leftward stream. They shout that the rank and file movement must be what they call "revolutionary." Others with a "New Left" appeal write off the working class as no longer a force for progress and seek new "revolutionary" forces.

A high mark in the rank and file movement was reached with the rank and file conference in Chicago, June 27-28, 1970, of 900 delegates and observers from numerous groups in unions from coast to coast. They rejected both the old ultra-leftists and "New Left" secessionists by an overwhelming majority.

The conference set up a center for coordinating the work of rank and file groups that aim for more militancy, initiative and progressivism in the existing mass-membership unions.

The spreading movement challenging the AFL-CIO's bureaucracy has also forced the AFL-CIO's leaders to defend their position in face of the fire both from certain leaders of unions in the AFL-CIO and the movement on the left. These top AFL-CIO leaders know that they cannot depend today on the red-scare methods of the Joe McCarthyism era and earlier, when the stock answer to all criticism was to label critics "Communists." Not many accept such answers today. The reactionary labor leaders also find that old gag rules and parliamentary tricks aren't as effective as they used to be against members in a rebellious mood.

So the line of the AFL-CIO's officialdom is to try to give a "new look" image to themselves and the federation. This is most clearly expressed in a recently published book titled "Challenge to Labor: New Roles for American Trade Unions," by Joseph A. Beirne, an AFL-CIO vice-president and president of the American Communications Workers, consisting of the employees of the American telephone monopoly.

It may seem ironic, that Prentice Hall, Inc., a major publisher of business books and a research service for corporations, should publish Beirne's volume. But that needn't surprise anyone. Beirne had previously written an 80-page book in 1962, similarly titled "New Horizons for American Labor," that became a sensation in the labor relations offices of many corporations and was given rave reviews in business publications. The *Wall Street Journal's* weekly publication,

the *National Observer*, reprinted in 1963 about a third of this book, an entire key chapter.

Some commentators on union affairs even saw "presidential timber" in Beirne—a possible successor to Meany.

There are of course others in the AFL-CIO who are eyeing impatiently the chair occupied by 77-year old Meany. But there can be no doubt that Beirne's latest book was designed as the top AFL-CIO leadership's answer to the critics. The book was given the highest possible imprimatur. The sendoff for it came at the AFL-CIO convention in Atlantic City, on Oct. 2, 1969 at a lavish cocktail reception arranged by Prentice Hall, at which delegates and guests received a copy of the \$6.95 volume, as they entered.

Beirne's background may also throw some light on why he seems so favored in business circles to chart "new roles" for unions. Until his entry into the CIO in the late forties, he headed the National Federation of Telephone Unions, the largest company union in the country, comprising employees of "Ma Bell," and earned praise for his "statesmanship" in that capacity. Shortly after the Supreme Court's validation of the Wagner Act, which formally outlawed company unions, Beirne's "union" took on an independent image after some legal face-lifting. Some years before his entry into the CIO—an entry timed with the CIO's embrace of the cold war and expulsion of progressive-led unions—Beirne was a leading light in a movement to establish a "Confederation of Unions of America" of independent unions that had undergone a face-lifting, to rival the legitimate unions.

Beirne's personal background is of secondary importance, however. His "Challenge" will be examined in detail in this book because it is the only book-length defense of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy against current criticism within the labor movement, particularly from the rank-and-file movements.

Beirne also tries to give a new shine to the tarnished image of the AFL-CIO. There have been other such efforts, like an earlier book by Gus Tyler, employed by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, who already sees a "revolution" in labor and titled his book the "Labor Revolution." In the recent period George Meany, too, did some philosophizing on labor's past and future.

We will see how much new there is in Beirne's "new roles" and Tyler's "revolution," and we will examine the various elements within the Left and the perspective charted by the Chicago Rank and File Conference.

My main hope, in writing this book, is that it may be of some help to the great number of younger workers in the unions, or still unorganized, who seek direction for a more vigorous and militant labor movement. They are the major force for revitalizing it.

CHAPTER I

A PART OF THE "ESTABLISHMENT"?

Joseph Beirne begins his book "The Challenge to Labor" by "straightening" us out on the key question: what kind of society are we living in? To acknowledge that it is a capitalist society wouldn't conform to his "new look" approach. So he discovers that it is a "pluralistic" society, and he works pluralism to death from cover to cover. "Pluralism," he writes, is a "balance of forces and influences in society," and he explains how it is supposed to work:

"... there are in a democratic community groups or organizations or institutions which within themselves have differing motives and goals, but which in combination, or indeed sometimes in opposition, have the effect of maintaining a balance in the direction which the society as a whole finally takes—with the assumption that such a balance-of-powers leads to the best possible ways for society's growth." (p. 20)

The trouble, admits Beirne, is that "results are sometime irrational, even dangerous." But, he adds encouragingly, if we see to it that "there is no lopsided influence" and "we guarantee that there will always be one rider on each end of the seesaw," then pluralism will work and serve as "an alternative to the Marxist view of society and the 'class warfare' which such a view made mandatory."

Beirne credits the fathers of the Republic with conceiving the idea and, of course, that's what made the country "great." The balanced mechanism worked automatically and in the process, he writes, the country "just grew" as Topsy, and the labor movement, too, "just grew" as Topsy." (p. 19)

After thus picturing the wondrous social balancing as working with the precision of the celestial system, Beirne ran into some contradictions. Everybody knows, of course, of the century-long era when the country's choice resources were grabbed up by the "robber baron" class; of the rise of trusts as the next stage in the process of extracting super-profits from the masses; of the continued enslavement of the black people for 90 years after our wonderful "pluralism" was established; of the most intense exploi-

tation of white and black workers as the country grew rich and powerful; of the rise of U.S. imperialism on the basis of the still bigger monopolies.

Yes, the United States "just grew," and even when its industrial development and population surpassed all other advanced capitalist lands, the U.S. labor movement that "just grew" was still among the weakest in organization and politically. Obviously there wasn't much balance in "pluralism" through all those generations. Beirne therefore explains that the balance must still be achieved. A "primitive start" came in the eighties when the American Federation of Labor was formed, but far from progressing towards that goal, the worst imbalance came with the 1929 crash. He thereupon puts 1933 as the start for the "new era," the New Deal, when through some legislation and some growth in union strength, the balancing process began to work. At long last, he says, we are "developing a new order of society . . . in which capitalism, government and labor are blended . . . serving as both spur and check on the others." (p. 72) This "unique American phenomenon" has worked better than "any carefully-contrived ideological design," Beirne concludes.

The above is a summary of an essay for the naive, but that is apparently the best Beirne, the apologist for the AFL-CIO, can do to "justify" the leadership's policy of integrating the labor movement with the capitalist system, or the "establishment," as some of our "New Lefters" like to call it. The only perspective for the labor movement, argues Beirne, is to gain enough of a pressure force within this "pluralistic" establishment, to win some improvements for labor.

The idea that some sort of a "just balance" can be reached, with the workers getting their due, has been peddled by capitalist propagandists for generations. We are nearing the 200th anniversary of the Republic, beset by the worst crisis in its history, with the "military industrial complex" more firmly in the saddle than ever; the people in revolt against the U.S. imperialist war policy; the ghettos across the country in revolt; the campuses a battleground; a strike wave against the worst inflation in memory; the cities rotting away, becoming the worst slums in the country's history; repression rising with the threat of new anti-labor laws hanging like a dark cloud—but Beirne sees the maturing of that long awaited "pluralistic balance."

We have here a clumsy effort by a labor leader to cover up the fact that the lot of the workers throughout Beirne's "pluralistic" capitalism is to perpetually race against a treadmill just to make ends meet.

Since the earliest days of capitalism, its ideologists and their

echoes within the ranks of the working class have sought formulas to "liquidate" the class struggle. At the turn of the century, Gompers and his close associates joined the major industrialists (almost all of them non-union) in forming the National Civic Federation to promote a class collaboration and pro-imperialist policy in the ranks of the unions. His successors then tried it. George Meany even came before a dinner of the National Association of Manufacturers in December, 1955, at which he boasted:

"It may interest you to know that I never went on strike in my life. I never ordered anyone to run a strike in my life, never had anything to do with a picket line." (*New York Times*, Dec. 11, 1955)

In his 1962 "New Horizons for American Labor" that so pleased the industrialists, Beirne concluded that the strike weapon was becoming obsolete in the major industries, adding that "it seems obvious to me, we are apt to see in the United States a recognition by the unions in numerous other (besides his own union) major industries that they will be wise to use the strike less frequently."

In his 1969 book, published in the midst of a strike wave, Beirne retreats a little on that prediction. We'll deal with the strike question later.

The 20-year-long era of company unionism, especially in the twenties when the "union" in the telephone system that Beirne eventually headed was founded, was another such experiment in pluralism—on a shop level—with the employer's influence outweighing the "union's" about 100 to one. The basic principle guiding such "unions" was that the workers and employer can live happily as partners within the plant walls because their interests are common.

All such efforts to "liquidate" the class struggle failed because the workers, even in organizations led by class collaborationists, continued to struggle and often shed their blood in the fight for at least a tiny advantage in Beirne's "pluralism."

Throughout the history of the old AFL and later of the AFL-CIO since the 1955 merger, leaders have tried to incorporate labor into the "establishment," basing their line on precisely the type of nonsense Beirne outlined in his book. In some fields the class collaborationist labor leaders do make arrangements with employers for joint projects for higher productivity and even for price fixing or bid-rigging with the union as "enforcer." A good example was the "mutual trusteeship" scheme dreamed up by David McDonald, former president of the United Steelworkers of America. This was only another name for the same old efforts to somehow involve unions into collaboration for higher productivity. The entire scheme

failed and exposed McDonald to so much ridicule that I. W. Abel, who defeated him for the presidency in the next election, used the issue to good vote-getting advantage by mocking his "mutual trusteeship," "cocktail unionism" and "tuxedo unionism."

The ideologues of class collaboration usually point to the garment field for their classic example of employer-union partnership in an industry that was once a battlefield between employers and workers. There is some truth in this case. David Dubinsky who led the International Ladies Garment Workers Union for many years until his recent retirement, has always showed primary concern for "the good of the industry." Whatever the policy of bypassing wage rounds or holding wage raises down to an irreducible minimum may have done to the industry, the workers are today the lowest on the wage scale of manufacturing industries. The absence of an effective rank-and-file movement is one of the major reasons for that situation.

As a general rule, however, the militancy of the workers even where labor leaders are able to hold it down for a period, eventually breaks through, either in the "wildcat" way or through pressure on officials, as it did in 1970 when some 200,000 post office workers struck without authorization for the first time in history. *The history of decades of futile effort to bring the workers into the "establishment," and the fact that usually more workers strike in the U.S. every year than in any other country, should be adequate proof that the organized working class is not in the "establishment."*

Strange as it may seem there is a breed of New Left "revolutionaries" in the United States, fortunately declining in influence, most of whom are not in the working class, who say the trade unions are part of the "establishment." They shout "revolutionary" phrases from the rooftops but come full circle to exactly the position of the conservative Beirne. As we will see later, this is not their only point of contact. So we have the following situation: the employers want the unions in the "establishment"; the "revolutionary" phrasemongers scream the workers are in the "establishment"; the labor leaders of the Meany-Beirne-McDonald type try but *can't* bring the workers into the "establishment."

CHAPTER II

THE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION
AND LABOR

The elementary task of a union is to protect the worker's job rights and advance his earnings, working conditions and general welfare. The current technological revolution is seriously challenging the ability of unions to give their members this protection.

The rapidly advancing new technology goes far beyond what is generally referred to as automation. Involved is a wide application of technical innovations that displace even more workers than the strictly automated, electronic and computerized techniques. Parallel with those advances are the new advances in transportation, packaging and marketing, substitute materials and products that come with progress in chemistry, especially in plastics. The changes eliminate much employment in certain fields, wipe out old occupations and create some new ones.

The trend has been accompanied by a big shift to service, white collar and technical occupations, resulting in a considerable change in the composition of the working class.

Not unrelated has been the rapid rise of super monopolies and conglomerates in recent years. The large corporations have the capital to apply the most advanced technology and turn it into super-profits. The current trend of take-overs of multi-million dollar corporations by conglomerates or monopolies that became conglomerates is the latest stage in the traditional capitalist cannibalistic process of the strong swallowing up the weaker. Only this time a conglomerate like Ling-Temco-Vought swallows up a giant like Jones & Laughlin Steel, a half billion dollar corporation.

The advantage is greatest for the elite corporations that truly fit into the "military industrial complex" category. They get the lush Indochina war and other Pentagon contracts out of the trough of \$72 billion annually budgeted for that purpose. They have the retired generals and admirals on their staffs to negotiate for the contracts. They have the right political contacts for profitable orders. The Pentagon liberally subsidizes their research and experimental work.

These new ways of displacing jobs and occupations they acquire

gratis for application to their civilian operations. An example of the way the system works was in the announced government program to subsidize and build 300 superpowered large capacity vessels within ten years and make them available to the shipping companies. These are to be the most up-to-date container ships, like those able to take 1,200 trailer size loaded boxes trucked to specially built docks. The operation of these vessels are to be automated to a maximum. New spacious relocated docks, to replace most of the old piers, are equipped with hoisting equipment that leave little work for the conventional longshoreman. It is hardly a coincidence that this shipbuilding program came soon after just about every major shipping company was taken over by conglomerates that had their eyes on the profits to be made out of the new technology.

The monopolies are playing still another profitable game. They use their super-profits extracted from the sweat of U.S. workers and the generous Pentagon orders, to *set up plants in many countries where labor and the cost of other operations is much cheaper*. In countries where, as in Japan, foreign control of industries is limited, the American corporations buy into partnerships of existing firms which are expanded with U.S. capital. A big part of the product from these U.S.-controlled or partly controlled firms is marketed in the U.S. in sharp competition with domestic production or abroad in traditionally U.S. markets.

Much of the "miracle" of Japanese rapid industrial growth is due to U.S. investment in its electronic, automobile and other industries plus, of course, assumption by the U.S. of most of Japan's military burden. The same holds in the other areas where U.S. imperialism is based, notably in dictator-run Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, with Vietnam in prospect and to an increasing extent in Indonesia. It is the imports of those countries, where wages are a fraction of U.S. pay, that have already killed hundreds of thousands of American jobs. The experience has been a factor in the recent disillusionment with U.S. foreign policy in much of the labor movement, especially at the local level. The same policy has been applied in Latin American countries for many years and has been accelerating in the recent period. Just in 1969 U.S. firms imported from Mexican assembly plants products processed from U.S. parts valued at \$145 million. Three years earlier there were virtually no imports of this type from Mexico.

The combined threat of automation and all the related factors to jobs and unions was clearly evident in the fifties. Concern became serious enough in the CIO to cause organization of a conference in Washington on April 14, 1955, on the "Challenge of Automation." After the AFL-CIO merger in December, 1955,

several conferences were arranged in the next several years on automation, the shorter workweek, new problems in collective bargaining and on the changing work force. All discussions concerned the problems arising from the new technology. One of the major reasons for the merger given by negotiators of the unification was the urgency of labor unity to meet the new problems.

Enough books, conference proceedings and documents on automation and the related subjects were produced in that period to fill several sizable book cases. But basic action was yet to come. The proceedings of the 1955 CIO conference make interesting reading today because they show the thinking that was developing among labor leaders at that time.

This writer witnessed how naively the participants greeted the soothing speech of John Diebold, one of the early experts on automation. Diebold said, "If we are to improve our standard of living . . . we will not only be able to tolerate automation, we will need it." He added that "as time goes on, we shall have to devote smaller and smaller proportions of our day to the trying task of earning a living" and do so with more goods "with a lessened and more dignifying human effort." He saw things becoming less costly. After projecting a happier future with automation, he said, "We ought to be thinking in terms of speeding it up rather than slowing it down." (*The Challenge of Automation*, Public Affairs Press, Washington, 1955, pp. 17-18)

Seeing Red

The consensus of that conference, in which all top officers of the CIO read papers, was well summarized by the main speaker, Walter Reuther, then CIO president. Reuther declared, "We have said many times that we welcome automation and that we are going to encourage the expeditious development of this new technology". Reuther, whose wisdom then was far short of the level it reached in his final years, also tried to fit the issue into an anti-Communist framework. The Communists charge, he said, that there cannot be a "singleness of purpose" in a capitalist society torn by class struggle, and he continued, "I believe the Communists are wrong. We can prove it not by pious declarations, but by working together, free labor and free management, free people, free government and free society, finding the answers to our basic problems."

The conclusion of that conference was that unions should aim for joint employer-labor programs to retrain displaced workers, prevent loss of earnings due to job change and give advance notice to unions of anticipated changes.

Similar thinking ran through the conference for the shorter workweek held by the AFL-CIO Sept. 11, 1956 (Public Affairs Press). That conference called for a cut in the worktime through a cut in weekly hours or through any of several other ways, as the major step to meet automation.

On January 16, 1958, a similar day-long reading of papers took place on "The Changing Character of American Industry" (AFL-CIO Publication No. 67). On June 15-16, 1959, the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department held a conference on "Collective Bargaining Today" (IUD Publication No. 28) also mainly devoted to problems arising out of the new technology.

From one conference to the next, the plea was directed to the employers to "see the light," and cooperate "for their own good" with unions on automation and for the common anti-Communist goal.

Reuther opened the June 15, 1959, conference with a bitter complaint that "the National Association of Manufacturers and the big business groups of America, are waging a class struggle precisely as Karl Marx said it would be waged. They are working overtime to prove that our free society is composed of irreconcilable, competing and conflicting economic pressure groups incapable of achieving common denominators and common purposes in peacetime. If the American labor movement begins to respond in kind, together we will prove that Marx was right."

"We will get a shorter workweek," he said. "The question is, why can't we get it under circumstances where labor and management can cooperate in trying to create the proper kind of climate and the proper kind of facilities?"

As if in answer to his question, soon after that conference, Reuther negotiated a contract with General Motors that received general membership approval but was nevertheless followed by a wave of GM plant strikes across the country involving more than 100,000 workers for more "relief" time (time for going to the toilet.) GM was forced to sign a supplementary agreement giving assembly workers an additional 12 minutes "relief" time to a total of 24 minutes daily. This, in fact, was the only cut in the worktime the GM workers won since the sitdown of 1937 that resulted in their first contract.

James B. Carey, who was then secretary-treasurer of the IUD (he was eventually driven out of labor when his tellers were caught shifting to him his opponent's votes,) said:

"President Eisenhower told his press conference last week that he is disturbed by evidence of a tendency in this country to adopt the Marxist theory that class warfare is inevit-

able between workers and employers. Possibly he is right about class warfare. Class warfare is being provoked by big business and industry, spending untold millions of dollars each year to lobby in state legislatures and in congress for anti-labor and union-busting legislation."

Speaker after speaker at that conference took off on the Eisenhower reference to class warfare, and they placed the terrible class struggle at the door of big business and the government. In the style of the times, they boasted of their readiness to fight the "real enemy"—Communism.

Joseph Keenan, secretary-treasurer of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and then and still a vice-president of the AFL-CIO said:

"I returned just a few months ago from a trip to Asia and I saw again first hand just how serious the Communist threat is. The people there fighting this threat need help and need it badly. And where are they turning for this help? To America's labor leaders. Business interests have not provided the kind of help needed. . . . We could be doing more, but unfortunately, too much of our time and energy has been spent for our right to exist and for the right to do the job we are set up to do—bargain collectively."

The classic example of shortsightedness in that period was the view of John L. Lewis when he was asked by *U.S. News and World Report* (Nov. 9, 1959) about the United Mine Workers' attitude towards mine modernization. He replied:

"The United Mine Workers not only cooperates with the operators on that—we invented the policy."

That was the policy that made the UMWA a partner with the operators in the business of turning the Appalachia area into the most poverty-stricken area in the country. As big mechanical miners moved in, miners were dismissed in the tens of thousands and forced onto government surplus food. From a membership of 600,000 the UMWA was reduced to a membership of 90,000 working miners. And in the bargain, the mechanical miners cause so much fine coal dust that a greater number of miners than ever contract "black lung" disease.

Many years have passed since the 1955 and subsequent conferences on what to do about the new technology. Men like Diebold who had a head start as consultant on automation have grown rich. The technological revolution, spurred by government subsidies, sweeps on at a greater pace than ever. Profits rose to fabulous heights. War and war orders have become more attractive than

ever to many corporations. The promised rapid rise of living standards did not materialize for the overwhelming majority of the workers. Inflation has forced millions to living standards below the level of ten years ago.

The shorter workweek campaign that the AFL-CIO launched with publicity fanfare in 1962, didn't even get off the ground. But the seven-hour day has become universal in the Soviet Union since then. Nor has anything been done on the much discussed complaints since the mid-fifties of the "job export," as U.S. corporations went international in a big way. Today the products of those corporations are pouring into the U.S. on a scale no one imagined possible during the fifties.

CHAPTER III

WHY THE AFL-CIO FAILED

The most serious indictment of AFL-CIO policy on the new technology is the fact that its leaders were fully aware of the threat it poses to the workers and to the labor movement generally.

Many labor leaders had concluded in the fifties on the basis of some experience and extensive research that the idea of getting employer cooperation with unions to meet the automation problem was a naive illusion.

Addressing the AFL-CIO conference on the shorter workweek Sept. 11, 1956, Meany conceded that "there is a possibility that automation will turn out to be a curse to civilization rather than a blessing." Opening the AFL-CIO convention in New York on November 14, 1963, he observed that one often hears it said that automation could be a "blessing," and continued:

"I have come to the conclusion and there is no longer any question in my mind as to the direction automation is going today. There is no element of blessing in it. It is rapidly becoming the real curse in this society." (Convention proceedings.)

Earlier that year, the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department issued a pamphlet titled "Automation's Unkept Promise." Referring to the rosy view of automation at the above-mentioned 1955 conference, the pamphlet said:

"Many of us accepted those views in 1955, but we certainly cannot accept them now. The time has come to re-examine the optimistic but unfortunately false notions that: 1. Automation like all forms of technological changes, ALWAYS creates more jobs than it eliminates. 2. Automation is a slow, evolutionary process. 3. Automation leads to massive upgrading of the labor force. 4. The 'market place' will automatically assure an equitable distribution of the fruits of economic progress."

Nevertheless, the AFL-CIO scarcely acted on the problem before or after Meany said those words. Some unions of the AFL-CIO tried to meet the problem within their own limited possibilities, like retraining of some displaced workers through programs partly

financed by the government and partly by the employers; longer vacations; concessions making possible earlier retirement for displaced workers, or more paid holidays. But the number of workers affected by such arrangements was only a small part of the working class and the measures had only a minimal effect in terms of job security.

Generally, employers felt little restriction in their use of the new technology. Where they did face resistance, many employers took refuge in other locations and in right-to-work laws.

Turning to the chapter on new technology in Beirne's apologia for AFL-CIO policy, we find he is still saying what the labor leaders were saying in 1955. Writing in 1969 (p. 172) he says labor must not only learn to "live with automation" but should "welcome it sincerely and openly." He boasts that his own union "has pragmatically welcomed it for what it is: a way to higher wages, better jobs, longer vacations, shorter hours." The higher the productivity, adds Beirne, "the closer we shall be to the truly Great Society."

"This is the challenge of pluralism," he writes, meaning, of course that he expects everything to be for the best through co-operation of employers, unions and the government.

This comes from a labor leader who at the April, 1955, CIO conference on automation reported that already then 83 percent of the Bell System was automated and that along with a gain of 1,400,000 telephones, "Ma Bell" had 17,500 fewer workers and that its profits had doubled in nine years. One could imagine what Beirne could report 15 years later about the reduced employment, the well-known tremendous increase in the profits of American Telephone and Telegraph and the increase in the number of telephones. But still he writes, "We must actively prepare for the tremendous changes that lie ahead," as though nothing had happened. We still get nothing concrete from him on what action is needed. But we do get a program in "new look" language. We need, he writes, "imaginative social changes," "responsible collective bargaining," "creative law making," "systematic fact-finding," and the "spreading of benefits of automation to everybody." We are no closer to anything meaningful than we were in the 1955 conference. What is "creative," "imaginative," and "responsible" to Beirne is the very opposite to others, especially those hit by the new technology.

Beirne doesn't examine why the AFL-CIO's program on automation and the technological revolution remained on paper. *Most responsible for the AFL-CIO failure is its classless approach—the denial of the existence of the class struggle and the continual dependence of its leaders on some mythical joint program with the*

employers to meet the problems of automation. To deny that there is a class division in the United States—basically of the working class and the employers—and to deny there is a class struggle, is as silly as to deny there is a law of gravity or that the earth is round.

At the base of effective unity and struggle is the consciousness that all who work for a wage are class brothers and sisters with common aims. The propaganda denying that the workers have a class interest was at the base of the old company-union line that held the worker has more in common with his employer than with fellow "outside" workers in an industry as a whole or with the working class in general. This is still the line used by employers against unions during a collective bargaining election in a plant.

Most labor leaders don't really believe their own oratory denying the existence of classes. Most of them came up through the class struggle. They think that echoing the line peddled by employer propagandists is good "public relations," or may gain them favor in relations with employers. But try as they may to look like "statesmen," such labor leaders are often forced to give way and sanction and organize strikes and picketlines, arrange mass demonstrations and do other things of a class struggle character, because of rank-and-file pressure and because the employers follow a class policy at the collective bargaining table.

The classless approach also involves acceptance of many false formulas and definitions, the idea that automation is "progress," for example. *Progress for whom?* It was certainly progress for A. T. & T., which has been able to hold its position almost uninterrupted for many years as the world's top profit maker. But is it progress for the workers forced out of their lifelong occupations? Is it progress for their wives and children? It may even be progress for a few workers whose retraining for new occupations and higher pay came at company expense. But it is the opposite of progress if those benefits for a few come at the expense of many others.

Similarly, the term "productivity" is used in a classless sense. In a capitalist society, in which the means of production are owned by the employing class, higher productivity is to the benefit of the owners. It may well work to the detriment of the worker, cutting his season or costing him his job entirely. This, in fact, is widely recognized in the labor movement. One of the most common grounds for disputes and causes of "wildcats" is an effort by employers to squeeze ever more production out of fewer workers. *The real test is "productivity for whom?"*

In labor literature on automation you often run into the argu-

ment that a greater national product is to the benefit of "all" the people. The United States has increased its national product substantially in the years since the discussions began on automation. Has that improved the position of the working class? To the contrary, the position has deteriorated or has hardly changed for the big majority of the workers. *Again, the real test is "greater national product for whom?"* For wars in Indochina? For "foreign aid" to advance an imperialist policy? Or for higher living standards for the mass of people, for elimination of slums and the racist living pattern in America, for cleaner air and water?

The same test applies to Beirne's remedies. "Imaginative social changes" by whom and for whom? It would take an extraordinary imagination to dream up something that would please both the president of A. T. & T. and a telephone operator or installer. "Creative law making?" Even the conservative lobbies of the AFL-CIO in Washington run into the solid wall of corporation anti-union lobbies on about every piece of legislation. "Responsible" collective bargaining? That term has been used against unions since the dawn of collective bargaining.

There is no sure remedy for all the problems arising out of automation under the capitalist system. But, as on every other front, so long as we have capitalism, the workers have no alternative but to wage organized, militant struggle to make even small progress or to hold on to what they have. But the sowing of illusions that it is possible and necessary to get the cooperation of the employers to meet the problems of the employees has restrained the unions both from pressing for meaningful and possible demands to meet the consequences of new technology and from fighting for them with the necessary vigor. *The classless approach takes the sharp edge out of labor's fight for even limited relief.*

So far, the technological revolution has been very inexpensive for the big corporations. What better evidence can there be than the doubling of profits since the mid-fifties while REAL wages have been almost at a standstill for most workers?

Every Union On Its Own

In the absence of an effective national struggle by the AFL-CIO, some of its affiliates were forced to seek independent measures. Some unions won concessions to allay the fear of job loss among their members and make possible orderly transfers of some workers to other work. But, as already noted, the number of workers covered by such protective measures total only a small fraction of the organized workers. The guarantee that goes with such

protection is not always solid. The experience of the unions that have tried to meet the problem independently is quite instructive. What type of remedies are usually sought?

One approach is to give priority to displaced workers for job openings in other departments or nearby plants of a company. Others include retraining at full company expense; advance notice to unions on automation plans; employer-financed automation funds from which to compensate workers displaced by new technology; longer vacations, and even "sabbaticals" of three months for high seniority workers (steel), more paid holidays, more paid days for sick leave and an option for workers to retire on pensions before the legal social security age.

Some unions have won higher pensions supplementary to Social Security checks to attract retirement. In some fields as, in the case of longshoremen in New York whose employment is hard hit by containership expansion, there is an annual wage guarantee that comes close to the full basic pay of a worker. Others have negotiated supplementary unemployment benefits (SUB) that in the auto industry come close to full pay for one year. Some unions have been strong enough to hold off new technology or other ways of drastic reduction in employment, by their effective control as bargaining agents. After years of delay, the railroads eliminated firemen as not needed on diesel engines, although the unions are still pressing for employment of the fireman as a second man with the locomotive engineer. Printers have for many years enforced the "bogus type" rule that requires setting and then scrapping the type that duplicates ads that come in mats. They have also held off for some time the introduction of computerized equipment. But in the recent period such restrictions, too, have been crumbling or have been eliminated by agreement in exchange for some other concessions to unions. The pay some longshoremen get for doing no work because the piers that employed them shut down is just a "payoff" for a free hand to automate longshore operations at new docks elsewhere.

Admittedly, none of these remedies meet the problem basically. They only postpone the blow long enough in some situations for high seniority workers to reach retirement age, or they only cushion the blow for certain workers. It is the stronger unions and some of the skilled crafts that have been able to get one or more of these protective concessions. Most important of all, however, there has been no basic change in the workweek of 40 hours (longer for millions of workers not protected by federal law). Only a fraction of the workers are on shorter hours, mostly in construction, printing and garment. The last named are on the 35-hour week, but it is almost meaningless for most because

their work is seasonal and 85 percent are on piece work.

Although the concessions were limited, unions had to wage long and sharp struggles to win them. Those struggles showed that workers fight very hard, if need be very long, to protect their job rights. These struggles also showed that concessions could be won and that unions need not assume nothing can be done against "progress." *But why didn't labor's leadership organize a nationwide struggle for the most basic demands like the 35-hour week, that would have a substantial impact and benefit ALL the workers? Why wasn't a nationwide struggle organized for application of the federal "Full Employment Act of 1946" that obligates the government to provide work where private industry fails to do so?*

Such demands involve a struggle of far greater scope and intensity than the fight for the limited partial concessions. They cannot be left to each union "doing its own thing." It takes a coordinated movement of all unions to get the strength and impact needed for such demands. To repeat what we wrote in 1961 (*American Labor: Which Way?*, New Century Publishers, New York):

"Long experience and American labor history should teach us that important advances, especially a cut in hours—a demand employers fight most intensely—cannot be won easily with a union here or there trotting out to take up battle. Only a wave of struggles involving the whole labor movement can promise a significant breakthrough for the shorter workweek. That's how American labor broke through in the thirties.

"The fight for the shorter workweek can well be the catalyst for the labor upsurge every thinking trade unionist knows must come if the labor movement is to get out of its defensive position, defeat employer attacks and resume the very urgent task of organizing the unorganized." (p. 77)

In 1962 many in the unions were under the impression that something like a general movement would get under way for the 35-hour week. The AFL-CIO passed the necessary resolutions at an Executive Council meeting Aug. 13, 1962, and splashed out with much publicity and some multi-colored pamphlets on the shorter workweek. But nothing happened and the federation's leadership didn't even take the trouble to tell the members why the effort was dropped.

Survival of the Fittest

The AFL-CIO leadership's approach, leaving it to each union to do the best it can on so general an issue, means that it is only

the strongest unions that are the "fittest" to meet the test. This lopsided policy widens the gap between the skilled and strongly organized and comparatively higher paid and the big majority of unskilled or semi-skilled who enjoy less pay or job protection.

Still another factor that contributed to the AFL-CIO's failure to make a fight on the key issues arising from automation was the steadily escalating war in Indochina and the "decade of prosperity" it stimulated. To the top labor bureaucracy it was a welcome opportunity to sidetrack the automation issue. The more than usual availability of work, until mid-1969, especially for the skilled, reduced the pressure for meeting the problem. Most of all, these labor leaders, strong backers of the developing Vietnam war policy, *sought to prevent a serious labor struggle at home, that a fight for the 35-hour week would inevitably demand.* But it is precisely in this decade of escalating war and profitable "prosperity" that the technological revolution received its strongest impetus.

It was the decade during which the government dished out tremendous sums for technological research as part of "defense" expenditures. Skyrocketing profits plus government subsidies and tax write-offs for new plant construction and modernization gave impetus to the shutdown of old plants in unionized areas and relocation in "right-to-work" states, or in other countries.

The longer the top leadership of the AFL-CIO sits out the problem of new technology in the hope that it will somehow walk away, the more difficult it becomes to grapple with it and the more fearful are the leaders to meet the issue basically. Beirne gave some indication of this fear in an address in Arizona May 1, 1970, a day after President Nixon announced the U.S. invasion of Cambodia. He said:

"Suppose last night, instead of escalating into Cambodia, President Nixon said we are pulling every man out in the quickest manner, with airplanes and ships; if he had said that last night, this morning the Pentagon would have notified thousands of companies and said, 'Your contract is cancelled'; by tomorrow millions would be laid off. The effect of our war, while it is going on, is to keep the economic pipeline loaded with a turnover of dollars because people are employed in manufacturing the things of war. If you ended that, tomorrow these same people wouldn't start making houses." (Quoted in the *Daily World* of June 23, 1970)

Beirne and his co-thinkers are more concerned with the problems peace may bring than with continued killing in Indochina. As staunch believers in the profit system, most labor leaders see

no way of seriously combatting the effects of the technological revolution. In line with traditional capitalist thinking they see these effects as inevitable. The law of survival of the fittest is their guide. Those who can get occupational retraining, afford a higher education or belong to strong unions, can survive. But what about those who for racial or economic reasons had no opportunity to acquire a higher education or training for skills, and what about the big majority who are not in any unions? *They wind up on the scrapheap of "unemployable." They pay the price.*

It is on the problems arising from the technological and scientific revolution that the difference between a socialist and a capitalist country is most apparent. In the former, the more technology and science, the greater the productivity, the more benefits are spread to ALL the people. In a capitalist land, technology and science bring job insecurity for a greater number and keep millions in poverty.

The immediate choice in the United States is not between socialism and capitalism. We are still considerably short of that stage. But the adherence of most of our labor leaders to the capitalist profit system weakens and limits even the struggle for immediate objectives.

CHAPTER IV

A LOOK AT LABOR'S POLITICS

Beirne makes a sweeping claim for AFL-CIO influence in U.S. politics. As in all other fields of labor activity, he fits labor's political action into his "pluralism" and denies that U.S. politics reflects class interests. He insists that the AFL-CIO is politically "independent," because occasionally it endorses a Republican, and then turns most of his chapter on politics against a labor party or a new people's party in the United States.

Beirne boasts that the AFL-CIO's role in politics is "constantly increasing" and attributes the "success" to the "union leader as an elected official" because he acquires in the union "the skill in winning approval and votes of others." In addition to the union leader's ability to get approval for programs and contracts he negotiates, and stay in office, he is a pragmatist, writes Beirne, and politics is "eminently a pragmatic art." Another advantage, he writes, is that the union is a "year-round functioning organization." The two old parties practically go out of business the day after election, he claims.

How valid are Beirne's claims? Is labor influence in politics increasing? The real question is "increasing for what?" Is it reflected even in acceptance of men of Beirne's type for meaningful government posts? Has labor's fear of new anti-labor legislation diminished since the Wagner Labor Relations Act was passed in 1935? Is it shown in much new social-economic legislation since the Wage-Hour Law of 1938 was passed? Is the fact that George Wallace came dangerously near to getting 20 percent of the trade union vote (as the AFL-CIO executive council reported to the 1969 convention) a reflection of that increased role?

Clearly the answer to such questions is whether one looks with the eyes of a "pluralist" or whether one sees a struggle between the two basic classes—the capitalist class and the working class.

In the field of politics, too, the class struggle frequently breaks through despite the claims of the labor leaders that there is no class element in politics. On certain occasions even the capitalist-minded labor leaders are forced to release the full political strength of the unions to meet a danger that even they dislike to face. One such occasion came with the all-out drive by the AFL-

CIO and many of its affiliates shortly before the 1968 election to turn back the George Wallace influence indicated in some unions by the polls. It was a vigorous and effective campaign. Wallace's vote among union members was cut substantially, though it was still too large.

We have yet to see acceptance of labor leaders into cabinet positions, or their assignment as ambassadors to a country with more than two million population. Union leaders, at best, are appointed to assistant posts or as labor attaches with embassies in some countries. The long record shows that while Democratic and Republican party politicians love labor's votes and financial aid at election time, they don't trust even a conservative labor official with a meaningful political position.

As for Beirne's boast that labor officials are "skilled" in the art of getting elected, heaven save us from the election skill that has been traditionally practiced in most unions run by the leaders Beirne is defending. We'd have the old-type Tammany Hall machines and entrenchment of political bosses as never before in American history. It is the dictatorial practices and in some cases racketeering practices in most of the unions controlling the AFL-CIO that alienate sections of the population which could or should be politically allied with the unions.

Beirne emphasizes that the union is a year-round organization. That's true and could be an advantage. But is the union year-round in politics? Beirne pictures an ideal Committee for Political Education (COPE), in a union. After an election, writes Beirne:

"Political action staffs pore over the statistics, ward by ward, and precinct by precinct, seeking the secrets of victory or defeat. Checks are made to see how effective the registration campaign was, how many members actually voted on election day, how many election day workers were on the streets and where. The campaign is discussed at union meetings, and post-mortems help in the shop and during coffee breaks." (p. 62)

The above sample of Beirne's picture of a year-round COPE under national direction may impress persons uninformed of union conditions, but it is hardly in accord with realities. There are documents in AFL-CIO files and convention resolutions on what COPE is supposed to be. But you've got to search far and wide in Beirne's own union or almost any other in the AFL-CIO to find a COPE unit that fully meets Beirne's description. Most local unions don't even have COPE units. It takes months of agitation and cajoling prior to an election to get local unions to form or reconstitute a COPE unit. COPE gets least response from those

very conservative unions, like the building, printing, metal and other of the craft unions, upon which the federation's controlling group is based.

Most locals that do respond do so with dollar-a-head for COPE collections. Those collections, as annual reports of the AFL-CIO indicate, hardly come to 10 percent of the AFL-CIO's membership. There are in addition some unions with their own political machinery. They take their own collections. But no sooner is an election over than even the functioning COPE units fade away until next election. Some units are revived occasionally for pressure campaigns on issues before a state legislature or Congress, but year-round groups are few and far between.

The Key Questions

The key questions are: Why such weak response to an AFL-CIO political call? Why, as the AFL-CIO executive council reported to the 1969 convention, was Wallace drawing 20 percent of the trade unionists, according to polls, until the AFL-CIO campaign cut that percentage?

Because through the history of the old AFL, with hardly a change since the 1955 merger, the policy has been not to change the South but to conform the unions to its reactionary influences. Far from combatting racism among the workers, many labor leaders, by deed or word, encouraged racism. At this writing three years after the Wallace threat, the International Association of Machinists, polling its members on presidential preference for 1972, showed Wallace running with 20 percent or more even in the northern states.

The labor movement, writes Beirne, is "bound together with the cement of common ideology much more sharply defined than that of either of the major political parties." Also, he writes, unions have "clear lines from the national body down to the local organization" and are therefore "under much less pressure to compromise." (p. 63)

This is directly opposite to the truth. Beirne himself contradicts his claim.

In fact he argues that the labor movement doesn't need an ideology and that what he claims is the "cement of common ideology" is really the ideology of capitalism that to his thinking is even more "sharply defined" in the AFL-CIO than in the two old parties.

A labor or third people's party, Beirne argues, is "the application of ideologies of other times and other countries to a totally inapplicable situation" in the U.S. and would be an "incalculable disaster." He rejects the need of an ideology expressing the inter-

ests of the working class, as follows:

"The first of these is the nature of American dispersed capitalism as distinct from the European forebears. American capitalism has been demonstratively successful in meeting the demands of the American people within its framework. It has been flexible enough and dynamic enough to pass on to the working people of the country a sufficiently large share of the fruits of industry to meet the continually rising demands of the people. . . . The result is that the American working man, as distinct from his European, South American, African or Asian counterpart, does not feel trapped." (p. 64)

Beirne further adds that the labor movement finds no fault with the "system of capitalism" but only seeks "more of it." For that reason he sees the two old parties as "parties of opportunity rather than as parties of ideology," structured to "accommodate diverse elements." (pp. 55-56)

If capitalism is so good to the working people and there is no ideological difference, what ground is there for effective and independent political action of any kind by the labor movement? With an outlook like Beirne's can the unions have a sharp edge to their political activity even at its very limited level, as now, within the framework of the two old parties?

"Labor best performs its role in the life of our pluralistic nation when it acts as an independent force," writes Beirne a page later. But doesn't that contradict his entire argument? When workers do get angry and force their leaders to shelve their class collaborationism for a while, they make progress. One such angry moment came with the campaign against Wallace. The campaign in support of the 102-day strike of 150,000 General Electric workers, the nationwide "wildcat" of 200,000 postal workers, the 1968-69 strike of longshoremen against the effects of new technology, were other occasions of class and independent action breaking out of Beirne's "pluralism." But in the next paragraph Beirne writes, "As a general rule, we oppose acceptance of elected political office by trade union officials. . . . Nor do we encourage the acceptance of political appointments by trade union officials."

This shows how far the AFL-CIO hierarchy goes in placing its trust in the political spokesmen of capitalism. What happens to Beirne's "pluralistic" structure that presupposes the participation of "diverse elements" within it?

There are some obvious explanations for Beirne's frank conclusion. Many labor leaders do not want to give up their power base within the union or their salaries that usually run higher than income from political office. Another is the feeling among labor leaders that they

neither have a popular image nor the political skill (despite Beirne's claim) to beat the seasoned practitioners in capitalist politics. *In the absence of distinction in ideology, how different can a labor official's appeal to an electorate be from that of the "regulars" of the two old parties?*

Other very obvious reasons are the close identity of most top labor leaders with the Indochina war policy and the shameful racist policy followed by some labor leaders, especially in the building crafts. This alienates many working class voters, and sectors of the population that oppose the war. Many union officials are also in the Democratic or Republican machines of their areas and are not likely to be challengers of the political "establishment."

Finally, as Beirne observes, there is the "deplorable fact that among the major nations of the world, the U.S. consistently has the lowest proportion of its population voting. Roughly only two thirds of those eligible do register and only two thirds of those go to the election polls on election day."

Beirne might have added, as COPE literature often notes, that the picture is even worse among the workers because voting participation of the well-to-do and middle class people is far above the national average.

Beirne's "labor" political action is much like the company unionism of the twenties. But, as we observed earlier, the class character breaks through occasionally with candidates and issues in the field and the kind of campaign for them that violates Beirne's "pluralism." Often local unions ignore the choice of candidates by the national, state or city labor bureaucracy. But it is also evident that the absence of real independence and of a class approach in political activity takes the dynamics out of political action even if it is waged for a labor-endorsed liberal in the Democratic or Republican party.

CHAPTER V

FOR REAL INDEPENDENCE IN POLITICS

Recent developments in the United States refute Beirne's argument in defense of the policy of the AFL-CIO leadership limiting labor political action within the framework of the two old parties. He claims an "exceptionalism" for America, that a labor party or a mass people's party won't get rooted because U.S. political soil differs from that of other lands. Beirne doesn't bother to seriously examine why third parties were not sustained.

At issue is a mass-based party, representing a substantial section of the trade unions, the black and other minority people's organizations, and allied sections of the people, against the monopolies, for peace, full equality and progressive reforms. Some advanced capitalist countries have reformist mass-based Socialist parties. In a number of countries, like France, Italy or Finland, it is the Communist parties that have the major mass base among the working people. In Great Britain, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and, partly along similar lines, in Canada, the unions officially provide the organized base for reformist labor parties. A unity trend is evident in Latin America, notably in Chile, where a coalition of Communists and Socialists was victorious in 1970, and provided the political expression for the workers. Finland, Japan, India and Ceylon show a similar trend.

The various mass-based parties like the above are by no means alike. The British Labor Party is hardly more radical than the liberal wing of the Democrats. Much the same, or even less in some cases, can be said of the West German and similar Social Democratic parties. Nevertheless, all these mass-based parties are apart from the open capitalist parties of their respective countries, and millions of workers act through them as their political organizations. The effectiveness of those parties varies. There is hardly a comparison, for example, between the very moderate Socialist Party of France and the much more radical Socialist Party of Japan. There is also a changing process. Some parties give way to rank and file pressure for more effectiveness and militancy. Some get radicalized by a united front relationship with the Communist Party and others on the left. One fact is almost universal in all countries where legal possibilities exist—most workers do not accept the *idea that the historic parties of capitalism should be their political voice*. But Beirne, like most top leaders of U.S. unions, claims the United States is different. As already noted, he says that American

capitalists, unlike those of other countries, are very good to the workers, and that this is the only land without class division or class struggle. So why should we have a party of the workers and of the oppressed?

Even the auto and teamsters' unions, sponsors of the more advanced Alliance for Labor Action (ALA), do not favor the establishment of an independent party backed by the labor movement. The late Walter Reuther often voiced the perspective of a sort of polarization that would concentrate America's progressive forces in the Democratic Party, with the conservatives bunched into the Republican Party, but with the two-party system intact.

The policy of tailing one of the old parties, almost always the Democratic Party, has become "frozen" over a number of decades. It is precisely for that reason that labor's current line of political action has no cutting edge. Labor's votes are held by Democratic politicians to be virtually safe in their pockets on the theory that labor has "nowhere else to go."

There is some truth to some arguments, among them Beirne's, that labor or other third parties had a short life in the United States because old party politicians often take over the issues on which the independent parties ride. The Democrats under Roosevelt absorbed several state Farmer-Labor, progressive and Labor parties or substantial movements for them during the thirties and forties, along with their issues.

Experience in several countries and the United States proved that the major force that gives sustaining power to a party of the working class is strong union support. With that type of stable, mass backing, a party wouldn't become skeletonized with the "takeover" of its issues by others or the appeals of demagogues. The third party movements in the United States have been mostly abortive because they were launched with no significant or real labor base. Until the twenties, such efforts were mostly based on farm areas, spurred by depressions that hit the farmers hard, usually in terms of temporary marketing conditions. An assortment of middle class forces and small groups of unions were a secondary support in those movements.

With the twenties and early thirties, a new quality entered the labor party movement as some substantial sections of the labor movement were attracted, spurred by the anti-union and company-union drives and later by the prolonged big depression. The aftermath of the federal government's ruthless strikebreaking in the 1922 railroad walkout was a movement for independent political action and a nationalization plan by the railroad unions, then a powerful force.

Farmer-labor parties were launched in several states. The cam-

paign of the Trade Union Educational League, led by William Z. Foster, resulted in resolutions in support of a farmer-labor party in local and national unions representing a substantial part of the trade union movement of the early twenties.

So significant was the pressure for a new party in trade union ranks that even Samuel Gompers and the AFL executive council departed from their traditional policy and endorsed the candidacy of Robert La Follete, the progressive, for the presidency in 1924 on a third ticket. This labor campaign was a major factor in rolling up almost five million votes for La Follete. The U.S. unions had barely four million members then. But no sooner was the election over than Gompers convened an AFL executive council meeting to vote an immediate break with the rising new political upsurge. This was a fatal blow. But the election *demonstrated conclusively that trade union backing can give potency to a new people's party.*

The crisis thirties produced more similar lessons. The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, the most successful and longest sustained such party, was based on substantial farm and trade union support and showed it could win state political power. La Follete's Progressive Party won in Wisconsin.

New York's American Labor Party was mainly a product of a trade union bloc with several hundred thousand members. In this party's 20-year history, the most substantial vote, a half million, was won in the period when it had its strongest trade union backing. While the Minnesota and Wisconsin parties, as well as other rising state labor party movements, were absorbed by the New Deal of Roosevelt, the ALP was a casualty of McCarthyism and the cold war. The general trend towards political independence of the progressive forces in the U.S. was slowed during McCarthyist repression.

Currently, there is a rising new upsurge of independence from the old parties. The polls show a steadily rising percentage of Americans who class themselves as independents—neither Democratic nor Republican. In the Harris Poll, 23 percent of those polled in May, 1971, said they were independents compared to 17 who said so on November, 1968. Outside the South, the poll showed 24 percent independents, against 16 percent in November, 1968. In the Gallup Poll, 52 percent of the college students said they were independent.

Senator Eugene McCarthy suggested the possibility of a third people's party in 1972 (N.Y. Times Magazine, June 7, 1970). He based his view on the already demonstrated independent trend among voters, the strong independence among young voters and the unlikely elimination of the Indochina war issue by the 1972 election. McCarthy is certainly right on the independence trend among voters. This is especially evident in the 18-21 age group.

The power of political machines has declined across the entire country. Party loyalty is at an unprecedented low.

There are two major factors that Senator McCarthy did not take into account in his *Times* article: whether a substantial section of the trade union movement would back such a new party and whether the black and Spanish-speaking peoples would get behind it. Past experience should make it evident that without these two major forces there is not likely to be what McCarthy says may be a "party of substantial strength and substance" in 1972.

In line with the historic role of the conservative trade union leadership, Meany, in his August 25, 1970, press conference that won him headlines, discovered that relations with the Republican Nixon administration were "as good as could be expected" and trade unionists were "looking less to the Democrats because, actually, the Democratic Party has disintegrated." The Meany group, far from recognizing the trend away from old party control and toward real political independence, is working to hold the unions within the two-party system, even if it means shifting towards the arch reactionary anti-labor Nixon-Agnew forces. A new party would never emerge if it depended on *the Meanys for a base. It will take hard work at the rank-and-file level to build up a strong enough pressure for recognition of the new trend among a substantial section of trade union leadership.*

In the ALA's leadership, as in the rest of labor's leadership, (and this also goes for many at the local and regional level) there is a fear of undermining the traditionally labor-supported liberals and some black legislators in Congress or in some state legislatures. That fear is valid in many places. But must independent political action be put on an all-or-nothing basis? The British Labor Party wasn't launched on a certain day. Its development was a process that began with trade unionists as candidates in some areas at the same time as most of the trade union political endorsements still went to the then major Liberal Party candidates. The process of building up the Labor Party continued as more inroads were made with successful Laborites. In time the number of Laborites was substantial enough to defeat the claim that the unions have "nowhere else to go." The start has to be made some time if labor's political action is to ever break away from the parties of the capitalist class.

CHAPTER VI

THE LEGISLATIVE RECORD

The AFL-CIO's policy on politics and legislation is described by Beirne as classless, "pragmatic" and devoid of what he calls "ideology." For that reason he, like the other men around Meany, claims that the federation brings home the bacon. Does it?

As is customary among AFL-CIO officials, Beirne credits the Truman, Kennedy and Johnson administrations for legislative achievements since the war. Beirne's chapter on legislation only restates the AFL-CIO program on objectives. There is no consideration for the future and for breaking of new ground—ground that has long ago been broken in some other capitalist countries, not to speak of the socialist lands. Most important of all, Beirne doesn't deal with the "how," which leaves us on the same path we have been going.

Unfortunately, too many people are deceived by the methodology of the AFL-CIO leaders. They usually take you back to the hungry thirties, with which they compare present-day conditions. They don't take account of the fact that people born in 1929, the year of the great crash, are now heads of families, with sons and daughters old enough to be in college or in the army. The measuring rod must apply to the seventies, not the thirties. The leaders of the AFL-CIO consider it the sole role of the labor movement to race with the capitalist treadmill. If the workers can keep up with the cost of living or, as some do, go a little bit beyond, then the union leaders proclaim it a great victory.

Since the 1938 Wage-Hour Law, the last major New Deal reform, periodic pressure in the form of mass campaigns by the unions has brought changes in the minimum wage law to correspond to changes in the cost of living and expansion of coverage to some workers, but the basic 40-hour week remained untouched legally. Similarly, unemployment insurance, social security, workmen's compensation laws, welfare standards and such provisions have been adjusted to meet the uninterrupted rise in the cost of living or have been reformed in some minor respects.

The only major, much hailed new legislation since 1938 was enactment of medical care for the aged—medicare. It took 20 years of struggle to get this partial government payment for health care for those above age 65. The glitter on this legislation wore off fast as persons on medicare became familiar with its small print in practice, and as monthly payments for physician's care deducted from social security checks almost doubled by 1971. Much as medicare

was welcome to millions for the little it offers, the reform is a long way from the universal government-provided health insurance for all, from cradle to the grave, that is in force in some industrially developed lands.

A measure of the snail's pace progress of social legislation in the United States is the fact that health insurance for all was at first incorporated in the original New Deal bill for social security in 1935. The sponsors of the measure agreed to take that section out, however, because of fear that the bill might not get a majority. The possibility was held out for enactment of a health bill in a later Congress. But by 1971 there was still no health insurance. President Nixon, by no means a liberal reformer, acknowledged in a statement in the summer of 1969:

"We face a massive crisis in this area (health care) and unless action is taken both administratively and legislatively to meet that crisis within the next two years, we will have a crisis in our medical care system which could have consequences affecting millions of people throughout the country." (Quoted from UAW convention resolution, April 20-25, 1970)

The resolution of the UAW, whose late president, Walter Reuther, headed the "Committee of 100 for National Health Insurance," consisting of prominent authorities in the field, noted that the U.S., the world's foremost industrial country, deteriorated to 14th among the industrial lands on infant mortality. It had been eighth in 1953. It ranks fifth in the overall death rate, but 13th in death from diabetes and 13th in fatalities from heart diseases. The U.S. degenerated within several years from 13th to 18th place in life expectancy for males and to 12th in maternal mortality. The infant mortality rate among non-whites is double the rate of the whites, with the non-white maternal death rate more than three times that of whites.

The irony in this sordid picture is that expenditure for health in the United States from all sources (government and private) now runs \$70 billion annually, according to latest estimates (6.7 percent of the current gross national product). This is far more than is spent in total or per capita for health in any country, including lands with full government-paid health care.

The belated movement of the trade unions for national health insurance in the U.S. is, of course, welcome. But can anyone seriously claim that the AFL-CIO's political and legislative policy is effective and gives leadership in face of this shameful situation on health? This is hardly a high mark for "labor as a positive force for social progress," as claimed by Beirne for the AFL-CIO.

Where were the leaders of the AFL-CIO for decades as health costs rose and health care escalated disastrously?

AFL-CIO leaders boast of the medical plans many unions negotiate with employers. They are of some help to the workers covered. But again, as in so many other aspects, it is the unionized workers, especially members of the stronger unions, who get the best advantages. The majority of the country's wage earners not in unions, the millions in poverty, have no such advantages.

There is another side to the story of welfare plans, which include medical and hospitalization in varying degrees that unions began to bargain for on a widespread scale since 1950. With this trend, the theory developed that legislatively there wasn't much chance for a health program, so unions might as well negotiate to make the employer pay. The legislative path was ignored. Union leaders even held that welfare plans would attract more of the unorganized workers to unionism. There was undoubtedly some validity to such hopes. But can it be said that welfare plan costs are really paid for by employers?

Since the welfare plan trend began, "package" bargaining developed. Negotiations were essentially for the total amount the employer is to give per hour or per week, and he often leaves it to the union representatives to choose how they want the "package" divided—for wages, medical, hospitalization, vacations, sick-leave, etc. In the final analyses, money that would go into the pay envelope is apportioned for welfare plans. The employer gets the image as the "giver" of those benefits. As Walter Reuther observed a number of times, the union is "really put in a position of bargaining for the medical profession," to meet the skyrocketing costs, with ever higher apportionment of raises to the welfare part. The same holds for the rising cost of life insurance and pensions (that goes to insurance firms) and hospitalization to pay to hospitals or Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

The issue is not whether unions have a positive role in social legislation. Unions have historically had a positive influence in the U.S. *The key question is whether the AFL, and later the AFL-CIO, provided LEADERSHIP for advances, and whether such advances as were made were as rapid and as significant as might be expected in comparison to the wealth of the U.S. and other industrial lands.* If the question is put that way, the boastful claims of Beirne and Meany are groundless. There is still much of the thinking at the AFL-CIO's top level that existed in the AFL executive council in the early thirties when it opposed unemployment insurance in face of an unemployment of 15 million. Let's examine the record on some other legislative issues.

The Record on Some Issues

SOCIAL SECURITY: This system, in effect for 35 years, has expanded so that today 12 percent of the population gets monthly checks under the Old Age Survivors and Disability Insurance programs. Much of this expansion is due to premature retirement by many who are unable to get work at their advanced age or cannot live on irregular or part-time earnings. A U.S. Senate Committee on the aging found in 1968 that "the overwhelming proportion of people retiring today receive total pension incomes—both from public and private pensions—which is only 20 to 40 percent of their average earnings in recent years." That was before the big inflationary jump of 1969-1971. Some unions, with a minority of the total organized membership, can point to pensions, supplementary to social security, in their contracts. But comparatively little attention was given to the legislative struggle affecting a big majority of the retired not covered by union contracts.

POVERTY: The government estimated in 1970 that there were 25.5 million Americans living in poverty, 12.6 percent of the population. That year the government defined poverty as \$3,968 or less for a family of four. The government boasted that this was a drop from the 39.5 million persons at a poverty level in 1960 and 28.5 million in 1966. There were more than twice as many white persons in poverty in 1970 as non-white, but the 17.5 million whites at that level constituted 10 percent of the white population, while the 7.7 million non-white were 33 percent of that sector.

The AFL-CIO executive council in its 1969 convention report observed that there was an "additional group of near-poor." The prolonged Vietnam war-stimulated "prosperity" enabled large numbers of poor and chronically unemployed to get at least some work that temporarily put them just above the poverty line. But at the first sign of the 1969-1971 recession it was those last hired, mostly black and unskilled workers, that were first laid off. Much of the statistical decline in poverty population was not real or sustained as shown by the 1.2 million rise in poverty population in 1970 over 1969. (*New York Times*, May 8, 1970)

It should also be recognized that since 1962, when the government set what it considered the "poverty line" at \$3,000, adjustments in that level were made only to match the increases in the national consumer index. The real poverty standard remains frozen. Actually the government's adjustments worked against the poor and low paid because the steepest rise in the cost of living was on the unavoidable items—food, rent, transportation, medical care. A third of the 25.5 million statistically counted as in poverty families have a breadwinner on a full-time job, observed the AFL-CIO council report, with Beirne among its signers. But in his book,

Beirne wrote that American capitalism "has been flexible enough to pass on to the working people of the country a sufficiently large share of the fruits of industry to meet the continually rising economic demands of the people." Beirne's statistics apparently do not reach lower than the minority of higher paid workers who are mostly in unions. A combination of traditional narrowness and racist influence held to a minimum labor leadership's interest in the mass of people living in poverty.

WELFARE: The AFL-CIO leaders, while boasting of the improvements won for the organized workers and some forms of protection against the new technology, have ignored the fact that along with the "prosperity" of the sixties public welfare rolls have also been rising steadily, totaling 14.2 million, 7 percent of the population, at this writing. In New York City alone the rolls passed 1.2 million by the end of 1970! This is a seventh of the population, a majority of it consisting of black and brown people. Those on relief are at the lowest rung of the poverty sector. Welfare payments ranged from an average of \$9.50 a person in Mississippi to a top of \$62.60 a month per person in New York in 1970. The national average welfare check of \$171.60 for a family of four in 1969 comes to about 55 percent of what the government sets as the poverty line.

In my 1959 pamphlet (*What I Saw in the Soviet Union*, New Century Publishers, New York), noting that the 1959 public relief rolls in the U.S. stood at 7,189,000, I observed that the technological revolution "dumps masses of men, women and children on an ever-growing slag pile of unemployables" living in chronic misery. In the supporting material I cited a speech by Rep. John M. Slack, Jr., of West Virginia in the March, 1959, *Congressional Record*, who described the plight of his state's 278,233 persons then on government surplus food, as follows:

"Only one conclusion is supportable in face of the evidence—our mode of industrial advance is cannibalizing our own people. Technical progress without attention to its by-products and effects on human beings is building a massive complex of industrial skill based on a pile of human bones and operating to the tune of wailing hungry children."

Rep. Slack's eloquent description in 1959 of how "progress" under capitalism brings both more profit and more hunger is still applicable, with the results even more frightful notwithstanding the large assortment of poverty programs. The growing slag pile of "cannibalized" people has received little more than cursory sympathetic attention from the top leadership of unions. How can you expect more when their apologist, Beirne, boasts that capitalism is good to the workers.

UNEMPLOYMENT, JOBLESS PAY: At this writing the fifth postwar recession is under way. Unemployment, at this writing, almost doubled since Nixon's inauguration. It rose and was 5.4 million, six percent of the work force (the chronically jobless aren't counted). Periodically certain labor officials recall that in 1946 Congress voted the "Full Employment Act" that was supposed to guarantee employment through government undertakings if private industry failed. But in the quarter century since the law was enacted, the labor movement did not wage a serious struggle for its enforcement. As strong believers in the capitalist profit system, with its dog-eat-dog evils regarded as unavoidable, most leaders of unions did not take the Full Employment Act seriously. The only part of that law that has been carried out has been the annual economic report of the President prepared by his council of economic advisers. The annual report shows that mass unemployment in the millions is chronic, but nothing is done about it.

A recent claim by Secretary of Labor James Hodgson that black employment has improved because statistics showed that the rate of unemployment in the black labor force runs less than twice of those in the white labor force, is false. It overlooks the fact that there is a steady flow from black jobless ranks to the relief rolls that have been rising both in time of prosperity and crisis so that today over 14 million American men, women and children are on welfare. In New York City, for example, of 1.2 million persons on welfare, 45 percent are black, 40 percent are Spanish-speaking and 15 percent white. Most of those on welfare able to work aren't even counted as "employable" and in the labor force. The same holds for Chicano joblessness.

The trade unions have been mostly interested in some improvements in unemployment insurance and widening coverage. That, of course, is very important. But in certain respects the law slid back since 1939 when it was enacted. The original concept of the law was that it should cover about half the wages lost by a worker. The 1969 convention resolution of the UAW observed, however, that while in 1939 lost wages by unemployed were replaced to the extent of 43.3 percent by jobless checks, the replacement in 1968 came to only 34.4 percent. There are still 16 million wage earners not covered by unemployment insurance.

Here again we have a clear example showing that by neglect of the struggle for a higher aim—for enforcement of the Full Employment Act—the labor movement buys nothing and only weakens its fight for the more elementary objective. The real struggle for unemployment insurance and social security, initiated by the left during the crisis thirties, has still to be followed up in a basic way for a constitutional guarantee of work or full wages.

HEALTH, OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY: The prediction of the

automation "revolutionaries" that the new technology will make work easier, safer and less harmful to health, is belied by the facts. The latest annual statistics show 14,300 killed on the job, with reported injuries disabling workers for a day or more estimated at 2.2 million.

A report of a research organization drafted for the Department of Labor observed that industrial accidents may be really ten times the number reported in Labor Department statistics. (N.Y. Times, Sept. 21, 1970)

In one of the finest examples of the way intellectuals and professionals can cooperate with blue-collar workers, a team of doctors in West Virginia, headed by Dr. I. E. Buff of Charleston, aroused that state's coal miners with disclosure of the widespread "black lung" affliction. Coal dust has long been the curse in coal mining. But with the introduction of the giant mechanical miner that produces a very fine dust at a rapid pace, the exposure to "black lung" became far more serious. The mine owners, taking refuge in the antiquated legal requirements on safety and health, showed no inclination to bring safety up to date. The Buff group toured the coal districts with its disclosures soon after the disaster at a mine near Farmington, West Va., that took the lives of 78 miners. The anger among the state's 43,000 miners brought a three-week strike for a state "black lung" compensation bill providing for benefit checks to miners disabled by the disease and a pressure movement for a stronger federal safety and health act for the mining industry.

This rebellion, spreading to all mining states, spotlighted the long cozy relationship between the coal operators and the heads of the United Mine Workers that kept safety at an irreducible minimum cost. The fight led to the rank and file movement among the coal miners that put forth Joseph Yablonski as a candidate for the presidency against W. A. (Tony) Boyle, the incumbent. Some days after the elections in the UMWA in December, 1969, while Yablonski was preparing to follow through on his announced step to challenge wholesale election frauds by the Boyle administration, the world was shocked by the New Year's Eve murder of Yablonski, his wife and daughter.

It took a major mine disaster, a rank and file movement and the shocking massacre of the Yablonskis to force enactment of an improved mine health and safety law and general safety improvements. But for a century, the slaughter continued in the mines, in certain years with as many as 2,500 deaths. The total lives sacrificed to "King Coal" nearly equal the number of miners now working—81,000 since 1910 when statistical records began. Why the shameful indifference to mine safety by the labor movement through all these years? Why has the U.S. labor movement permitted the

safety and health conditions to fall far behind those of England, France and other coal producing capitalist states, not to speak of the socialist states that have far superior safety conditions? It took Dr. Buff to induce the head of a Senate investigating committee to go with him to Czechoslovakia to study how that country manages to keep its mines almost dustfree.

The rebellion in the coal areas caused a stir in many other fields and brought pressure for new studies of occupational diseases. The Textile Workers Union of America began to give attention to "brown lung" caused by fine particles of cotton dust. The cause of much cancer among asbestos workers is undergoing fresh examination. The UAW has even established a psychiatric department to study the effects of the new technology on the mental state of auto workers. Government studies, too, are reported in various fields. But why have the AFL-CIO leaders been taking the slaughter and mass disabling of workers as a routine through generations? Is it because the state of affairs is also considered an "unavoidable" routine that must come with the blessed capitalist profit system? *Why hasn't the labor movement insisted long ago—by use of the strike weapon if need be—for on-the-job union-controlled safety men or women with authority, to stop a job found unsafe?* Such a union-controlled system is enforced throughout the industry in the Soviet Union and in all socialist countries.

TAX REFORM: The 1969 tax revolt was one of those occasions when an upsurge in the ranks forced angry statements from even many top labor leaders. A campaign much like the one that cut into George Wallace's vote among unionists won some concessions from Congress, but the tax system remains heavily lopsided in favor of the rich and the investors. The tax campaign of the unions took on a clear class character. The workers and other low-income people saw that in terms of tax policy the U.S. government is a government of the capitalist class. They learned for the first time of the many loopholes and gimmicks that enable millionaires to escape taxes. It was this simple dollars and cents discrimination that fired working class anger. The fury was all the greater when some of the widely distributed union material disclosed that, between 1960 and 1969, corporate profits before taxes rose by 93 percent and by 94.5 percent after payment of all taxes, with dividend payment to stockholders up by 80 percent for the period. (AFL-CIO Executive Council report to the 1969 convention)

It was good to see the AFL-CIO leaders and much of the labor movement with their research and literature departments doing a job on the tax question. But why did it take all these years, including the entire period since the start of U.S. intervention in Vietnam, before the floodgates were opened for a tax revolt?

Even during the early stages of the tax campaign, Meany and the executive council still opposed repeal of the ten percent surtax to finance the Vietnam war. It was only later, when some of the AFL-CIO vice-presidents spoke up for repeal of the surtax, that Meany, too, reluctantly favored repeal. The financing of the Indochina war and Pentagon expenditures always had priority with the AFL-CIO hierarchy. That is why they blocked the long-needed tax revolt for many years.

The above are only several of the major legislative fields that have been historically neglected or given attention only in a secondary way. The evidence refutes the claim in Beirne's apologia for the AFL-CIO that workers can make some "pragmatic" headway if they don't have an "ideology," meaning higher basic objectives. *The clear lesson stands out that if labor isn't guided by a working class ideology and higher goals, then it isn't likely to have the dynamics for more modest reforms.* Labor is even thrown back in some periods. To put it in baseball language, if you don't try for a homer you may not even hit a one-bagger.

How Secure is Collective Bargaining?

Are unions permanently guaranteed the right to exist and bargain collectively under the capitalist system in the United States? Are the rights they win fixed permanently into the country's legal system? Those questions have been asked since the 1806 conviction of shoemakers in Philadelphia for the crime of "combining to raise wages."

The Wagner Labor Relations Law enacted in 1935 was hailed as the "Magna Carta" of U.S. labor. This was the law that was to supersede all the confusion and anti-union decisions that kept unions on tenterhooks for generations. After some years of struggles and legal tests that brought validation of the Wagner Act, the feeling in the trade unions was one of certainty that the law legalizing unions was surely fixed into the life of the United States. Notwithstanding the validation of the labor relations law by the Supreme Court in 1937, some of the bloodiest battles in American labor history followed for union recognition because employers ignored the law. No sooner was World War II over than the corporations let loose a sweeping drive for repeal of the labor law or drastic changes limiting union rights. The major argument in that anti-union drive ran much like Beirne's "pluralism" line—the law, they claimed, swung the balance too far in labor's favor.

Enactment of the Taft-Hartley Law in 1947 wiped out much of the advantage unions had in the Wagner Law. The new law also set procedures for government interference in internal union

affairs. It served to soften up some of labor's leadership and bludgeon it into line for class collaboration. After a decade of such Taft-Hartleyization, another employer campaign in the guise of combatting corruption in the trade unions succeeded in getting passage of the Landrum-Griffin Law. More stringent anti-labor provisions were added to the "labor relations" package. A provision in the Taft-Hartley Law giving states the green light for even more drastic anti-union provisions resulted in enactment of the falsely labeled "right-to-work" laws in 19 states. Those states became a refuge for employers running away from unionism and investors who seek bigger profits from exploitation of non-union workers.

During the presidential campaign in 1968 a drive was begun for more labor "reforms," coordinated by a joint organization of legal brains and "labor relations" experts from 35 of the major employer associations in the country. Part of the plan, as disclosed by former Senator Wayne Morse in a speech in the Senate, was for either a drastic change in the National Labor Relations Board or its replacement by labor courts. These forces counted on Nixon's election. Within his first year in office, President Nixon went a long way toward changing the composition of the NLRB in favor of the employers, with a corporation labor relations man to head it. He also asked Congress for a law imposing compulsory arbitration in the entire transportation industry—railroad, trucking, airlines and maritime—with the perspective of extending that procedure to other industries. The obvious objective is to bar strikes in key industries. If that step succeeds, then the restraint would be virtually automatic in other fields. It is the key industries that provide the backbone for the labor movement and set the pattern for wages.

Another of the many steps taken by the Nixon administration was the recommendation by a Presidential panel, consisting of contractor, building union and government representatives, that agreements negotiated by leaders need not go to the rank and file for approval. The composition of the Supreme Court, which the President has begun to change, is also counted on by employers to reverse the "liberal" trend of recent years on a number of labor issues.

As we approach the 200th U.S. centennial, labor rights are not secure. They are still subject to the ability of employers to mount an anti-union campaign, to the composition of the courts, to Congress and to the resident in the White House versus the strength and the kind of leadership the workers must have in holding on to or gaining rights. The union contract hangs by a similar thin thread. *How in face of this record can Meany, Beirne et al., square their loyalty to a classless "pluralism" with the steadily backward trend in labor rights?*

CHAPTER VII

IS IT REALLY "GOOD"?

Many top labor leaders, when not in negotiations, make exaggerated claims of progress for American workers, but hardly go as far publicly as Beirne does. Significantly, Beirne didn't provide any data in his book to prove his claim that American capitalism has been good to the workers. He knows that it is meaningless to cite government statistics of steadily "rising" wages because in recent years the cost of living has outpaced wage increases. Also, the government's wage averages are based on only those who are working, and only on the time they are working. Those figures do not reflect fully the country's general wage or living standard because the average does not count the incomes of the mounting number of retired; the many forced to take pensions prematurely because of occupational displacement; the millions unemployed, and the additional millions of "unemployables" on relief.

Notwithstanding the limited value of government wage statistics, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics data are useful as an indicator of the trend. Most useful is the BLS wage index of "net spendable" average weekly earnings (after Social Security and federal tax deductions). This puts in "real" dollars the comparison with what average weekly earnings bought in the 1957-59 base period. In 1959 the average spendable weekly wage for a family of four was \$78.23. After more than a decade, by June 1970, the spendable average was already lower in terms of 1957-59 dollars—\$77.72.

Millions of workers do not get the weekly statistical average for 52 weeks a year. The national average figure includes millions who are below the average at a rate half of those in higher brackets or less. Many, whether in higher or lowest brackets, lost much during the five prolonged recessions and the slow periods in between since World War II. Much work time is also lost by millions of workers because they are compelled to strike for wage improvements to catch up with the cost-of-living rise.

The gross figure on a pay envelope has become meaningless because of the ever growing list of deductions—some noted on the envelope and some not. They include federal tax, social security,

state and city income taxes in a growing number of areas, union dues checkoff and other deductions depending on the state or the nature of union contracts, on medical or other insurance. Sales taxes take as much as seven percent, as now in New York, and more on gasoline, utilities and telephone service.

The 1970 average for all non-supervisory workers was \$119.70 weekly, according to the government. But after federal income and social security deductions, this average spendable income was just a little above \$100. In terms of 1957-59 dollars, that spendable sum in 1970 bought just about what the spendable average bought in the 1957-59 period. If this average wage earner got 52 weeks' pay annually, he'd gross about \$6,240, but his spendable sum is about \$5,400 for a family of four.

Now let us take the government's "three standards of living" for a family of four figured on an average for 40 major urban centers. Those budgets vary from city to city, but in December 1970, the Bureau of Labor Statistics brought those "benchmarks" of three levels up to what it cost to maintain those standards in the Spring of 1970. The average rose to: \$6,960 for the lowest; \$10,664 for the intermediate budget and \$15,511 for the higher. Taking note of the figures, AFL-CIO economists updated them to the end of 1970. This brought the levels to \$7,168, \$10,893 and \$15,976 for a family of four. (*AFL-CIO News*, Dec. 26, 1970)

When these three "benchmarks" were first announced by BLS on the basis of its survey in the spring of 1967, the trade unions generally assumed that the goal for a production worker should be the intermediate budget. But in 1971 the general wage average is still considerably short of the LOWEST BUDGET—by at least \$900 a year, the AFL-CIO noted, in December, 1970. *As inflation spiraled upward, the goal of the intermediary levels faded more and more out of sight.*

The AFL-CIO's executive council in its statement on the economy summarized in the Feb. 27, 1971, *AFL-CIO News*, observed that real wages were then "even below 1965" for the non-supervisory workers and that the weekly average for factory workers, who are the relatively better unionized, ran \$85 below the \$205 weekly the intermediary budget would require.

The AFL-CIO's own observation certainly refutes George Meany's assertion in press conferences in August 28, 1969, and August 25, 1970 that the U.S. workers are now "middle class" which would put them in the \$300-a-week, higher budget, category. He then said:

"I think the movement is in better condition than it ever was. I think that each year things are better. . . . We have

people who are constantly worrying about lack of militancy. We no longer march in the streets. We no longer have sit-down strikes. . . . Labor to some extent has become middle-class. In other words, when you have no property, you don't have anything, you have nothing to lose by these radical actions. But when you become a person who has a home and has property, to some extent you become conservative." (From transcript of interview by AFL-CIO publicity)

It appears Meany doesn't read the AFL-CIO's own convention resolutions and executive council reports with extensive data showing American capitalism as far from benevolent. It is, in fact, the AFL-CIO that has been charging the Nixon administration with forcing mortgage interest rates up so high that purchase of a house is beyond the reach of middle-class people. Title to a home with a 30-year mortgage, or a car on installment, doesn't make a worker a property owner in the real sense. Far from deterring working class militancy, the heavy indebtedness involved in such "property ownership" makes workers more militant because they must have higher earnings to meet their obligations. Copper workers who were involved in a nine-month strike in 1967-68, the General Electric workers who struck for 102 days and many others in similar hard-fought struggles, hold titles to homes and cars.

On Organizing the Unorganized

The real problem is the conservatism of the leaders of unions, as reflected in the views of Beirne and in Meany's dialogue with newsmen. This brings us to the problem closely connected with living standards—organization of the unorganized millions who are most in need of union strength today, and a willingness to lead the kind of struggles the present day challenge demands.

Until the mid-thirties, the old AFL's "philosophers" held the view that only the skilled are "organizable." Its leaders fought against those who advocated organization of the unskilled and semi-skilled and doing it on an industrial union basis. When a number of the AFL's unions came together into a Committee for Industrial Organization and began to organize on an industrial basis, these unions, with a million members were expelled. This shortsightedness did not, however, stem the onrushing tide of organization that changed the composition of the labor movement and increased its strength three-fold almost overnight. From 3.5 million in 1935, union membership jumped to 10 million by 1941 and to 15 million by 1945. The high point was in 1945-46, when unions had 35 percent of the non-agricultural labor force. The percentage of the unionized labor force then declined until, spurred by the Korean

war period "prosperity," membership grew by about two more million. But from 1953 to the mid-sixties, union membership was static, hovering between 16.5 and 17.5 million. The AFL and later the merged AFL-CIO even suffered absolute losses of membership in certain years.

As detailed in my earlier books (*American Labor: Which Way?*, 1961, and *CIA and American Labor*, 1966) the trade unions entered the road of decline and stagnation when their leaders embraced the coldwar policy. Instead of continuing the struggle against labor's real enemies, they became partners with its enemies in a war on "Communism." One of the first phases of that policy was abandonment of the post-war organizing drive and expulsion of unions with a million members because they refused to get in line with the cold war. Years of war between unions followed. At first it was a drive to smash the expelled unions. But the cannibalistic strife continued between the AFL and the CIO. The merger that followed was in effect a surrender of the weakened CIO to the old AFL bureaucracy. The public was told the unification would spur the labor movement to new organizing drives, but that promise did not materialize as new struggles erupted within the "united" body. The expulsion of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters for alleged corruption was the first outcome of that division. Later came a renewed conflict between industrial and craft unions. The big UAW, expanding the issues beyond that conflict, left the AFL-CIO.

Only since 1967 was there a significant upturn in membership for the U.S. labor movement as a whole to 19 million. But most of that increase was due to organizing success by the UAW, IBT, and a progressive-led movement for unionization of hospital workers. Also, there was a significant flow of local and federal government workers into unions. Some of the membership growth was automatic growth with the increase of employment on military orders at enterprises that had been unionized. *The labor force, however, grew much faster, so that unionization of the non-agricultural workers dropped to 28 percent of the labor force and for workers as a whole to 23 percent.*

There is ground to suspect, however, that the Labor Department's latest data giving the AFL-CIO's membership for 1968 as 15.6 million, is less than accurate. In its convention report, October 1969, the AFL-CIO executive council gave 13,005,000 as its per capita membership. That was after the loss of the UAW's 1,325,000 per capita. (proceedings, 1969 convention) The government bases its estimate on what the unions report to it. Some unions inflate their figures.

The AFL-CIO leaders are sitting out history much as their pred-

ecessors of the old AFL did. There isn't much thought given to new initiatives. In his dialogue with newsmen already cited, Meany was asked what the top leaders do to make certain that the rank and file backs their policies.

Meany replied, "I don't bother about it. . . . I don't look over my shoulder to see if the rank and file is following."

Pressed to explain how leaders know what the members want, Meany said, "I don't go searching and hold a referendum here and a referendum there because these things have a way of coming through the union structure." Meany simply says the leaders take cognizance of things the members may want if the measure breaks through the "union structure." But the idea of giving leadership to the members for new goals and initiatives doesn't figure much at AFL-CIO headquarters.

Southern Workers

Since the CIO upsurge of the mid-thirties there was much talk in the labor movement of organizing the South. But that task has still to be undertaken seriously. The South remains the main base of anti-unionism, racism and reaction. It is the seat of resistance to even the most elementary union rights. The Deering, Milliken textile firm dragged its 1956 refusal to recognize an NLRB vote, which chose the Textile Workers Union of America as bargaining agent, through the courts for 12 years before "justice" finally came. Similarly, the giant J. P. Stevens Co. defied Supreme Court rulings issued against it over several years.

The urgency to unionize the South is greater today than ever. The southern, mostly right-to-work, states provide a legal refuge to anti-unionism. The opportunity to organize is better than ever. There is a vigorous trend towards unions and militant struggle among the black workers in the southern states. In an effort to halt this trend, the southern racists stepped up their efforts, as is evident in George Wallace's neo-fascist movement.

The trade union movement has had enough experience, in such southern efforts as were made, to see that successful organization is possible where it is really tried. But the 1968 political campaign also showed that much of the organized working class in the South, because of weak organization, succumbs to the political pressures around it. A stronger union movement would also be qualitatively more effective against reaction. The big discrepancy between the southern states and the rest of the country in the rate of unionization can be seen from the Labor Department's Union Directory of 1969 giving the percentage organized of the non-agricultural workers in 1968: Arkansas, 19.1 percent; Florida, 14.4; Georgia,

16.6; Louisiana, 18; Mississippi, 13.8; North Carolina, 6.9; South Carolina, 7.5; Oklahoma, 16.2; Texas, 13.9; and Virginia, 16.6. Alabama has the highest rate, 20.1 percent, mostly because of the long-organized steel and mining industry workers.

While the major weakness is in the South, the picture is not too good in the rest of the country. The highest organized percentages are: West Virginia, 41.9; Michigan 36.2; Washington, 41.4; Pennsylvania, 37.3; New York, 36.2; Illinois, 36; Missouri, 36; Ohio, 35.8; and California, 31.9.

Unions are currently up in arms against the competition of imports from Asian and other low-wage areas. But much greater is the threat at home from the base for anti-unionism in the South.

The problem of an organizing movement is not only the will to launch it. You never really hear of anyone in the labor movement speak against an organizing drive. No convention of the AFL-CIO passes without a reaffirmation of its standing resolution for organization of the unorganized. *The problem is to accomplish a real shift of policy and orientation to make an organizing effort possible.*

It is generally agreed in the labor movement that organizing is more difficult today than it was in the thirties when massive militancy, sprung out of prolonged hunger, exploded with unprecedented force. The employers have developed a bagful of tricks for combatting union drives, and labor's "Magna Carta" isn't what it was in the thirties by a long way. A generation of stagnation and Taft-Hartleyization, cold war and McCarthyism has pretty much beaten out of much of the labor movement the old tradition of volunteer organizers. Most unions today depend on full time organizers for even leafleting plant gates. It also takes far more money to organize a shop, and often the services of expensive lawyers, before certification is obtained.

Nevertheless, most of the difficulties facing unions stem from *subjective* conditions. There is an underestimation of some *new objective* advantages for organizing. Let us examine some of them.

Hangovers Vs. New Advantages

First, the will to organize is not strong among some of the major leaders of the AFL-CIO because most of the stronger, old-line, craft-orientated unions, the federation's main conservative base, aren't interested. With their own immediate field well under union control, they have little fear of competition from unorganized workers. Construction unions well established in northern cities aren't afraid that their work would be shifted to a southern or other unorganized center. It's a shortsighted view, but such is the thinking in the leadership of many unions. There are some honorable contrasts.

Unions like the UAW, Teamsters, New York's District 65 of the Distributive Workers, Drug and Hospital Employees Local 1199, and the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union do spend millions of dollars to organize workers in localities far from their traditional base. They do so because they see the urgency of organizing if the level of the entire labor movement is to be lifted.

The UAW and Teamsters, for example, are currently conducting a joint organizing drive in the Atlanta area. They don't need the additional members to augment their own dues payments. In line with ALA policy, they decided to use some of their treasury to lift other workers to unionism. The most important problem for an organizing approach is to break down the indifference to an organizing drive, to financing and to staffing it, that afflicts some of the major unions in the country. A drastic change is needed *inside* labor in that regard.

Second, planners of organizing drives, surveying the field as they must, face the question: which sections of the working class are likely to be most responsive to an organizing appeal today? This, of course, doesn't mean that the appeal would be limited to those workers. From recent experience it is quite apparent that the black workers, especially in the South, are responding. The strikes of black hospital, sanitation and other service employees in the South in 1968-70 show an extraordinary militancy, dedication and tenacity. Moreover, such strikes, inevitably merging with the black liberation struggle, tend to rally the entire black community to their support.

Unfortunately, the trade union movement is a mixed bag in its attitude to the black workers. Many unions, in the construction, printing and some other fields, don't have a welcome mat out for black workers. By their attitude they give the entire labor movement a bad image in the black communities. A drastic change is needed *inside* labor on that score.

Third, youth is another element in the population that is currently restless and active and could be easily unionized with a better approach. Statistics show the U.S. labor force is getting younger. Many are coming into the blue, white and grey-collared labor force from college campuses. Large numbers who have been in the current phase of campus struggles will be on production lines. They bring with them a militancy along with some antipathy to unions because of the periodic pronouncements by Meany and other leaders in support of the Vietnam policy and because of racism in certain unions.

The youth are also more interested in problems affecting young workers. They are either newlyweds or plan to marry and have children. They don't start with paid up mortgages on homes. They

find purchase of a home is beyond their reach today, and rents are extortionate. They want a faster transition from apprenticeship to the status of journeyman and higher pay. Disadvantaged on seniority, they want job security. They demand younger people in union office. Some labor leaders are already discovering that they are inviting active opposition by their indifference to the issues of major interest to youth. The tendency in such cases is to rely on support from the older workers. The effect is to polarize young and old and encourage conflicts on issues like pensions and longer vacations for long service versus more money in the pay envelope. The youth in the plants are a vast dynamic reserve for the labor movement, given the proper attitude and a willingness to organize them. That, too, demands a drastic change *inside* union ranks.

Fourth, women workers, only 3.9 million of their 31 million in unions, are another major reserve for the labor movement. They form a tremendous part of the white collar and service workers the trade unions want to organize. Millions in manufacturing, notably in textile, garment, electronics, shoe, leather, printing and other fields, are not in unions. But if the labor movement is to be attractive to women, a drastic change is needed *inside* the labor movement.

Fifth, the vast peace movement in the country is not based on any distinct section of the population. No one will dispute the fact that millions are in the movement. The influence runs among non-union workers as well as among unionists. But it is the more progressive layer of the people. The ironic fact is that when the AFL-CIO waged its active drive to cut down George Wallace's support among unionists, it attacked him only on his domestic issues because the "official" policy of the federation on the Indochina war was as hawkish as Wallace's. The jingoist appeals of a Meany or a Beirne repels workers. A pro-peace position can win much of this movement for the unions.

The Strike Weapon

The labor movement has learned from its own history that it never breaks into new territory peacefully. It almost always takes a strike, or enough strength to threaten one, because the employers almost always force a strike test before they agree to bargain. The United States has had a history of more strikes, longer strikes and more strikers than any country in the world. But there is a current effort both within the labor movement and through the government to make strikes more difficult and to virtually outlaw strikes in some fields.

As already noted earlier in this book, there is an effort, with the

support of building trades union leaders, to make terms of a negotiated contract binding without requirement of rank and file approval. President Nixon asked for legislation imposing compulsory arbitration on all unions in the transport field. Employers are pressing for other "reforms" to limit the right to strike. During his Aug. 25, 1970, press conference Meany said the AFL-CIO is studying "substitutes" for strikes.

In his 1962 book, "New Horizons for American Labor," Beirne pleased the business press with his suggestion that unions "will be wise to use the strike less frequently." The basis for that advice was the change in the technology of many industries which he claimed enables employers to operate their plants with few hands for a long time. His prime example was the 11-week 1955 strike of his union in Southern Bell which, he observed, showed that automation of the system made it "impossible" to "cut seriously or even noticeably the volume of his (Bell's) business and income." Beirne concluded that with the automation trend there will be less and less strike effectiveness in other industries; and that labor needs "different and better tactics" than strikes to get collective bargaining.

There is unquestionably a demand for changes in labor's strategy because of new technology, conglomeration and internationalization of corporations, with which we'll deal later. But Beirne steers toward elimination of strikes. His 1962 book was spiked with such suggestions as a greater role to the government in bargaining, more use of the "safety valves" in labor relations procedures, pleas to be "more creative," practice "give and take," and respect "wage guidelines" (then 3.2 percent), and "more flexibility" by unions and management.

Beirne further advised a "full marshalling of economic facts" and a more "adequate public relations" by the unions, noting their obligation "to recognize the fundamental rights of management." He criticized his "union colleagues" for not "always exploring the possibility of developing relationships on a better basis with employers." Beirne deplored the fact that some union officials follow the "tough way," with ultimatums and "resort to the picket line." He even criticized those who press for an "unrealistic cut in the work-week." Such hints for "tomorrow's" collective bargaining made Beirne's 1962 essay a best seller among employer labor relations men. Beirne's view is not uncommon among conservative top leaders. But to say it publicly, and in a book, is more than any employer could wish.

Beirne's look into the future did not materialize, however. *Far from diminishing, strikes increased in number and intensity. Unions have been forced to find ways to strengthen the strike weapon to meet the new conditions.* Even unions that have been rivals have

combined for "coordinated" collective bargaining with the same corporation, as they did in the 9-month 1967-68 copper strike and the 102 day 1969-70 General Electric strike. More attention is given to solidarity support and boycotts, like the five-year boycott of California grapes that at long last brought a victory for the grape workers. In face of what's happening, Beirne, in his 1969 book, soft-pedaled his 1962 anti-strike "statesmanship."

Another factor that retards use of the strike weapon is the fear by some labor leaders of getting drawn into a walkout that would be long and costly. This makes them especially reluctant to initiate organizing efforts that could lead to such strikes. On the basis of recent experience a union cannot evade such strikes if it seriously wants to organize. The long strikes of hospital workers in Charleston, S.C., and Suffolk, Va., and the sanitation strike of Memphis in which Dr. Martin Luther King lost his life show clearly that the workers are willing to wage the struggle because they expect the labor movement to stand behind them. *Solidarity support will have to play a bigger role in the collective bargaining and strike strategy of unions.*

Solidarity was at the heart of the strategy that brought 13 unions together in a strike of 150,000 General Electric workers. GE, fronting for the country's biggest corporations, continued to practice a take-it-or-leave-it "bargaining" position, a stand that made a mockery of even the conservative approach to contract negotiations. This forced even the leadership of the AFL to organize a solidarity movement in support of the strike and even to accept the unaffiliated UAW, Teamsters, and the progressive-led United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers into the 13-union front. The AFL-CIO launched a drive for a voluntary dollar-per-member strike fund from its 13 million affiliated members. The fund was expected to be collected within several weeks. The strike was not expected to run 15 weeks. By the end of the strike the drive completed only the second million dollars. This may look like a large sum by past standards. But it was also evident that labor solidarity was still a long way from the what present conditions require.

Another factor underestimated by the unions is community support for organizing efforts and strikes. This, of course, demands a union attitude that can win and not repel community support. Unfortunately, some unions, even those involved in essential public services, do not take the trouble to inform the community of the issues at stake and to place the blame for inconveniences where it belongs. The effectiveness of community support is best dramatized in struggles of black workers. It is such solidarity from a community 40 percent black in Charleston that enabled

500 women hospital workers to hold out against great odds for 15 weeks and set the example to many other cities that now have a union.

The important immediate problem is to organize a massive education campaign within the unions for a fresh approach to organizing and for the obligation of every union, strong or weak, to contribute finances and staff. Most urgent is revival of the almost forgotten practice of involving the membership of unions as volunteer organizers.

CHAPTER VIII

ON BLACK LIBERATION

Adoption of a resolution calling for Chinese exclusion at its first convention in 1881 inscribed a racist birthmark on the American Federation of Labor that remains visible to this day. Chinese exclusion was eventually forgotten, but the master race pattern remained in force as affiliates of the AFL applied the bar against blacks and other "non-Caucasians." As the decades passed and the AFL grew the racist blot beside the union label also grew.

The split in the thirties that created the CIO and its sweeping organizing drives opened wide the gates of unionism for the first time to the black workers. Overnight, hundreds of thousands of black workers in basic industries streamed into the new union movement. They showed themselves to be militant and loyal to unionism. But the AFL gave way only slowly to the new trend, even in face of CIO rivalry. When the CIO merged with the AFL in December, 1955, many believed that the CIO's influence within the merged organization would work against discriminatory practices. But while some progress was made, results have been disappointing generally. The dominant group in the AFL-CIO leadership persisted in using a 19th century yardstick to measure the pace of progress today. The AFL-CIO leadership has defended leaders of affiliates who only take token steps in response to the pressure of the black liberation movement.

In Beirne's apologia for the elders in control of the AFL-CIO, we find almost nothing on black liberation. He makes much of the end of segregation in Red Cross blood banks, a fight won many years ago. He defends the AFL-CIO by ridiculing a letter Meany received from a woman criticizing the federation for inaction on certain civil rights issues. A slap at certain southern locals (not identified) for walking out of a central labor body that favored civil rights legislation winds up Beirne's analysis in labor's part in the black liberation movement. Beirne seems no more sensitive to discriminatory practices against women. That aspect doesn't get a line. And Beirne's own Communication Workers of America, according to the Labor Department's union directory, reported 178,750 women in a membership of 357,000, but none in top office.

Beirne gives the AFL-CIO a clean record on discrimination, blaming only some lower units for not seeing the light. Meany personally has hardly been a model for AFL-CIO units to follow.

There is no shortage of AFL-CIO resolutions on the civil rights issues. But frequently fresh breezes blow aside the federation's outer cloak to reveal some ugly features beneath. At the 1959 AFL-CIO convention in San Francisco, Meany angrily set upon A. Philip Randolph of the Sleeping Car Porters for speaking in support of a resolution demanding an end of segregated locals in some AFL-CIO unions. "Who the hell appointed you spokesman for the Negro workers?" shouted Meany. Randolph later made his peace with Meany's circle, but at that time he still actively challenged the federation's machine on discrimination as he had at a number of earlier conventions.

When Meany was informed that a rabid southern racist anti-laborite who was chairman of the House Labor Committee had died, and that the post would be filled by Rep. A. Clayton Powell, a Negro, he exclaimed, "Oh, my, that's terrible!" When the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People began legal action against employers and unions for signing agreements to perpetuate segregated progression lines for black and white jobs, Meany blasted the NAACP. That moderate organization of the black people was also attacked by Meany when its labor secretary offered testimony before a congressional committee on discriminatory practices in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Meany refused to let the AFL-CIO executive council endorse the historic August, 1963, Civil Rights March on Washington that was sponsored by leaders of ten organizations, among them Walter Reuther, Randolph and Dr. Martin Luther King.

Meany's most direct relation to a discrimination case came in May, 1963, when his intervention was sought in a stoppage of his home local, Plumbers, Local 2, New York, whose members had walked off a Bronx public construction job because a black and three Puerto Ricans were hired by the contractor.

The four men were refused membership on the ground that they did not take the union's occupational examination. Denying that the men had walked off for racial reasons, (although their racist slanders were well publicized in the daily press) Meany said, "They waked off the job, and as far as I am concerned, they are going to stay off. This union won't work with non-union men. If they were to go to work with these non-union men, I'd resign from the union and join some other union." (*N.Y. Post*, May 15, 1963.)

An examination was given the four workers later and as expected, they did not pass. Such tests, deliberately rigged against newcomers, especially if they are black or brown, is an old craft union method that has recently come under much legal challenge.

Meany's display of racist sentiment has not endeared him to

the black communities. They often touched off angry explosions against him. What could be more revolting to decent Americans than a column on the editorial page of *AFL-CIO News*, by its weekly columnist John F. Roche, objecting to release of Angela Davis on bail? (*AFL-CIO News*, March 20, 1971.)

The Black Coalitions

Since fair employment practices and human rights commissions were established in many cities and states, the black people have vainly tried through them to obtain equal employment opportunity. Then came a series of federal civil rights laws in which equal employment opportunity and provisions for enforcement were clearly specified. But, as is known, the racists didn't lay down their arms and comply. It took long, expensive and frustrating procedures to get validation of the laws in courts, and even then there was still the endless bag of tricks to beat. In some industries substantial job rights were won. In most there is still little better than tokenism. But the area where the struggle for black job rights hit a solid stone wall was in the building industry that employs more than 3.5 million workers under union contracts. Much of the building in the country is financed fully or partly by the federal, state or city governments. Much of it is in cities where the black population may run from 30 percent to a majority. Some of the construction is in the category of urban development, slum clearance, near or in the heart of ghettos.

The typical sight is white craftsmen at work angrily eyed by black men on welfare or on service jobs paying a third of a building tradesman's wages. Tight job controls, union books closed to new members, long apprenticeship, occupational tests deliberately designed to flunk applicants on grounds that have no meaningful relation to trade aptitude have been practiced by building trades unions since their earliest days as a way of safeguarding employment and the union from the surrounding sea of non-unionism. Whatever their merits in the distant past, *their practices, continued under present conditions, mesh with racism to amount to a more complete exclusion of black and brown workers in some crafts than has ever been known.*

To add to the injustice is the fact that the black and brown people pay much of the taxes that go to finance new construction. It is in this automation age, when many black and brown people are disadvantaged because of the greater importance of education for occupational qualification which they couldn't get, that the building industry offers jobs requiring comparatively less education. But even in terms of education, the black and brown worker

sees many recent immigrants on jobs who have not yet learned English well enough to pass some of the exams of the craft unions.

By the summer of 1969, after years of piecemeal efforts, legal tests and reliance on the "good offices" of prominent individuals, the people of the ghettos turned to black coalitions for mass action. Organizations of predominantly black membership formed united fronts in many cities for militant demonstrations. In Chicago, Buffalo, Pittsburgh and other cities the demonstrators forced shutdown of big construction projects for short or prolonged periods. Officials of some building trades unions, at first, took the path of counter-demonstrations. In Pittsburgh, Seattle and Chicago parades of "hard hats" were organized against the black coalitions. Racist organizations also saw an opportunity to capitalize on the situation and wormed their way into the parades with banners for "Wallace for President" and such. Local and state officials were forced to intervene and some projects were shut to prevent more violent clashes.

The situation in the building industry is well illustrated in the annual figures of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission set up under the 1964 Civil Rights Act, on black membership in unions that follow a system of referring workers to jobs through the union at the call of employers. It is through discriminatory practices in such referral systems that black and other minority groups of the population suffer most.

The three years with latest data showed a decline in the percentage of black workers in the building industry although the pressure of black coalition activities and some legal steps forced a slight improvement in certain crafts. *In 1967 the building trades had an 8.4 percent black membership; in 1968 it was 7.4 percent and in 1969, the latest EEOC figures (N.Y. Times, Feb. 9, 1971) show 6.8 percent.*

Here are figures for some of the building crafts in percentage of black members:

	1969	1968	1967
Boilermakers	5.5	3.9	3.9
Asbestos Workers	0.8	0	1.2
Bricklayers	9.5	10.00	9.6
Carpenters	2.6	1.8	1.6
Electrical Workers	1.9	1.9	0.6
Iron Workers	1.7	1.9	1.7
Operating Engineers	2.7	2.5	4.00
Painters	4.2	3.6	3.7
Plumbers	0.8	0.6	0.2
Laborers	24.1	29.2	30.5
Sheetmetal	(Not available)	0.3	0.2

Black employment and membership has even declined substantially in the laborers' field. It was 81,000 in 1967 and less than 67,000 in 1969. In the mechanical trades with unions that have a referral system, representing almost 400,000 members, only 1.4 percent are black, according to the latest survey.

The pressure of events forced the Nixon administration to make a show of interest in the problem. Its intervention came through the so-called "Philadelphia Plan" that requires a contractor bidding on projects partly or fully financed by the government, of \$500,000 or more, to submit plans on employment of minority workers. The Government issued guidelines for a four-year progression of minority employment in the building crafts. Actually, the "Philadelphia Plan" was conceived as a double-edged political sword. On the one hand the administration expected the black communities to be appeased and the black coalition movement to diminish. On the other hand, the administration saw the plan as a club to bludgeon the leadership of the conservative building trades into more active support of its foreign policy in exchange for moderate application of the plan or reducing it to nothing, by liberal use of loopholes.

Initially, the "Philadelphia Plan" did sow some illusions in the black communities among the moderates. For a period the Nixon administration, capitalizing on its almost total failure to give substance to the plan, received "hard hat" support in New York and some other sections of the country. But what little advantage it did get exploded into a reverse trend when it announced curbs on building trades wage increases in the name of combatting inflation. About the same time a new wave of anger mounted in the black communities as it became apparent that the "Philadelphia Plan" produced no jobs for black people.

The "Philadelphia Plan" has big loopholes indeed. A contractor had to show only that he made a "reasonable" effort to find the craftsmen he needed, and to indicate the skills he required and the time he needed them, to pass the government's conformance test. Even if government inspectors find a violation, a construction job runs out in months, and the time span for certain crafts may run only for weeks. In the end, hardly more is left than making it known, after the work was done, that a contractor didn't come up to requirements.

Nevertheless, the AFL-CIO and its building trades department fought vigorously against the "Philadelphia Plan," not because of its ineffectiveness as a weapon against discrimination but because these unions wanted no government interference of any type in their policy of tight control and exclusion of non-whites. They obviously fear that once the pattern is set, it could be made more effective

in the future. The Labor Department, to please the building union leaders, announced it will keep hands off where "hometown" plans are agreed upon.

Negotiations began in several cities, but agreements were slow in coming. An agreement in Chicago contained some concessions toward more non-white apprentices and a specified number of persons above apprenticeship age who qualify for on-the-job training to bring them up to occupational skills.

Later came agreements in Pittsburgh, Buffalo and other places that were inferior to Chicago's, although even Chicago's was less than satisfactory. It soon became apparent, however, that delivery was minimal even on those limited agreements and the "Philadelphia Plan" although declared legal in the courts, applied only to Philadelphia and Washington, and yielded few jobs for non-whites. The 1970 convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People declared both the local agreements and the government's program failures and called for renewal of the "Black Coalition" demonstrations throughout the country. In response to the NAACP's decision and its sharp attack on the Nixon administration's general approach to problems affecting the non-white peoples, Secretary of Labor John D. Hodgson, who had just stepped into the post, issued a statement that the department would move for enforcement of its job discrimination ban in 73 cities (N.Y. Times, July 10, 1970). But in view of the past record of inaction that followed such statements, the Hodgson order created no stir.

The tragedy is that in this struggle that has been dragging for years, the leaders of the AFL-CIO and of its building trades unions have been stoutly defending the policy of discrimination in the construction industry. Meany personally has been the most outspoken defender of that policy. In negotiations with the "Black Coalition" representatives, the representatives of the building unions were not alongside the black people at the negotiations table but were associates of the contractors. This is directly opposite to what the black-labor alliance is supposed to be.

For Organization and Dignity

The image of the building trades harms many unions in other fields whose record on discrimination is far better. Union organizers in fields with high black employment often have a hard time distinguishing their unions publicly from the building crafts. Fortunately, an increasing number of unions are able to distinguish themselves sharply from the conservative wing that provides a base for Meany's circle. Much of the recent growth of unions was precisely in the areas where black and Spanish-speaking workers are

most numerous. The 105-day strike of black hospital workers in Charleston, S.C., signaled a movement in many cities that brought a new national union in the hospitals with some 50,000 members to start with. The formation of the National Council of Distributive Workers of which New York's District 65 was the parent body, is another example. That union is headed by Cleveland Robinson, a black leader, and black and Spanish workers form a majority on the executive board.

The major force in the recent rapid growth of the State, County and Municipal Employees and of the American Federation of Government (federal) Workers was the influx of black workers into their ranks. More than 40 percent of the 105,000-member District 37, SCME, New York, are black workers. A high percentage of the newly organized federal workers in Washington are black. Since the famed 1968 strike of Memphis garbage collectors there have been many similar struggles of predominantly black public service workers, as in New Orleans, Suffolk, Va., Oklahoma City, Jackson, Miss., Cincinnati, Atlanta, Charleston. In many parts of the country, the new entrants inject new vitality into the labor movement. These workers are at a poverty level, angry, and militant, and they feel the strength of an entire black community behind them because their fight is part of the liberation struggle.

A strong element in the militancy of these low-paid black workers is a determination to establish a dignity and self-respect in the eyes of the general public. This in large measure is the influence of the late Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the continuing work of his widow, Mrs. Coretta Scott King. Dr. King initiated the slogan, "Soul power plus union power." Symbolic of that trend were the "I am a man" signs carried by the Memphis garbage strikers in their demonstrations. This approach was described by Miss Mary Moultrie, president of the Charleston hospital union, in a speech to the AFL-CIO convention in 1969 as follows:

"We won because we were able to forge a coalition of union power and soul power—a winning combination of organized labor and the civil rights movement. . . . We suffered much, but we learned a great deal. We learned that poor people do not have to suffer endless abuse and punishment without fighting back.

"We learned that when we stick together, when we are united, we are somebody. A year ago nobody ever heard of us. We were forgotten women, second class citizens. . . . And if it had not been for the union, we would still be forgotten people.

"We have demonstrated to the city of Charleston, to the State of South Carolina, and to people all over America that we can and we will overcome. And nobody, just nobody, is going to turn us around. And Charleston and the rest of the South had better believe it."

Brown people, too, are in the march. The five-year struggle of California grape pickers, led by Cesar Chavez, is an indication of the tenacity and militancy of the Chicano (Mexican-American) workers in the Southwest. The victory in the grape field and later in lettuce was an historic breakthrough towards unionization of the totally unorganized agricultural workers.

We are really witnessing a two-fold trend in the rising labor upsurge among the black and brown people. One is the struggle against the still continuing discriminatory practices in some unions and industries for an equal right to higher skills and pay, like the "Black Coalition" movement. The other is the response of the low-paid workers, especially in the services and in the South, to unions where even a moderate effort is made to organize. *They are determined to lend dignity to the menial tasks which many are forced to take and to make the employers pay respectable wages for them. This development is also infusing a stronger working class influence into the black liberation struggle and thereby is raising it to a higher level.*

Not in Leadership Level

Most unions are still not in step with the new trend and don't see its vast potential for labor's strength. Many unions with a high percentage of black and brown membership are still all-white at the top and middle-level leadership. At best they may have a token black person on the union's board.

Checking the delegations at the 1969 convention of the AFL-CIO, with more than 1,000 attending, I saw fewer than ten black delegates. This just about reflects the situation in the affiliates because only officials of unions get to AFL-CIO conventions.

The steel, clothing, ladies' garment, machinists, retail and many other unions with a large percentage of blacks still don't have black members at the leadership level, especially where it counts, in policy making.

Most disturbing is the widening gap between white and non-white members of the unions along demographic lines. The report of the AFL-CIO executive council to the 1967 convention observed that the survey by the Kraft organization it had ordered showed "nearly 50 percent of all union members and 75 percent of all members under the age of 40 to be living in the suburbs at the end of

1966," and that "cities are increasingly becoming Negro ghettos." Half of the AFL-CIO's membership is under 40, the survey showed. This means, the report went on, that most of the members "live outside the normal jurisdiction of the central labor bodies."

The report on incomes shows similar results. In 1966, 32 percent of the AFL-CIO families were in the \$5,000 to \$7,500 class while 46 percent were above \$7,500. By 1971 those figures were updated by at least 20 percent, the raises won in the four years. The income figures for black workers would be nowhere near those levels as U.S. income data show.

Many AFL-CIO members have little direct relation to the political, environmental and living conditions of the cities that are supposed to be the concern of the local union to which they belong. This is reflected in the poor attendance at union meetings and the weakness in turnout for political activities. *Unless unions restructure their forms and activities to correspond to present day conditions, they are not likely to be more effective.*

The indifference of many unions to the problems of primary concern to the black members both on the job and in their communities has in recent years caused emergence of black caucuses in some unions. The forms of such caucuses vary. Some come to life for union elections in support of black candidates and dissolve after the election. Some exist permanently and press issues within the unions or shop. Some groups are expressly anti-white. Others favor coalitions with whites. Some black caucuses enter into united fronts with white-led groups for joint black and white slates and programs.

It can be said that the caucuses in the unions reflect the different groups one is likely to meet in the black community. Those groups exist because there are injustices. Progressive groups in a local or shop can usually come to agreements with most black caucuses for common action for all progressive objectives, *provided the issues that primarily concern the black workers are made a prominent part of the progressive program.*

The black caucuses of today are a long way from earlier days when pressure for "black demands" was labeled "jimcrow in reverse" by some white union leaders. In those days even some black unionists fell for the argument that blacks don't want "special" action to advance black workers to leadership and they believed the assertions of white leaders that blacks could rise to leadership when they show "ability" and would do so through the ordinary process of "union democracy." Those on the left who pioneered in raising demands for "special" steps to advance blacks to leadership and training for higher skills were attacked for "black chauvinism."

Times have changed. Today even much U.S. law recognizes the

need of special bodies for "special" measures. Few today, unless they are outspoken racists, will dispute the need for steps to help black workers overcome the drag of centuries of slavery and legalized discrimination. It is not considered unusual today for a rank and file progressive or black caucus to demand a deliberate effort for election of a black worker to office in the union or even for setting quotas for job goals. Colleges face similar demands for expansion of black student admission, scholarships, etc.

Stress on demands affecting black workers is by no means a separation trend. On the contrary, in the overwhelming majority of situations, meaningful success in issues affecting black workers depends on whether there is black-white unity for those objectives. In the UAW's local elections in 1969, for example, it was where such black-white unity was in force that most progress was made in electing black presidents and other officers. Certain separatist groups got nowhere.

It is not surprising that there should be efforts to pin the "separatist" label on black caucuses and militant progressive trends in the black communities of the country. And in such efforts there are also black personalities who get encouragement from the top leadership of the AFL-CIO. The activities of Bayard Rustin, especially since he became executive director of the AFL-CIO-financed A. Philip Randolph Institute, illustrate that role. He is always on hand where the AFL-CIO bureaucracy may need a black speaker to defend federation policy.

On Oct. 3, 1969, Rustin brought the AFL-CIO convention to a noisy standing ovation for his speech (convention proceedings) denouncing as "union busting" the activities of the "Black Coalitions." "My fellow freedom-fighters," Rustin went on, "we will not let ourselves become stooges for those powerful economic interests that would use our struggle to depress wages and standards, or to cripple the unions that won them." Then paraphrasing words in an old Negro spiritual, "No more auction block for me," he said, "no more union-busting either," to the extra strong applause of the delegates.

Rustin followed this with high praise for the AFL-CIO Building Trades Department which had just completed a convention devoted mostly to attacks upon the "Black Coalition" movements and to a strong reaffirmation of the old policies. The convention statement of the building union leaders, said Rustin, "is a statement on which we can base profound progress," adding, "I know that in many cities the building trades themselves have taken the initiative to initiate such programs."

We have here a clear pattern: through the oratory of a black spokesman, the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and its most reactionary

building trades group charge that the movement for more jobs for black people in major near lily-white building crafts serves the enemies of labor—is “union busting.” Overlooking the fact that the NAACP, one of the more moderate of the organizations of the black people, is a leading force in the “Black Coalition” movement, Rustin described it as a movement of “separatists” and “militants.”

Soon after the AFL-CIO convention, Rustin wrote an article in the January, 1970 *Harper's Magazine* titled “The Failure of Black Separatism.” In it, he rightly observes that certain anti-white, separatist, black business and similar movements have, indeed, failed or have produced only negative results. But he takes advantage of those consequences to build up a case against ALL militant, progressive trends in the black and brown communities and to argue for support of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and the Democratic Party.

He is disturbed because “the bitterness of many young Negroes today has led them to be unsympathetic to a program based on the principles of trade unionism and electoral policies.” (*Ibid.*) All experience shows, however, that it is not opposition to “principles of trade unionism and electoral politics” but to those principles and policies as practiced by Rustin's friends in AFL-CIO leadership that is at issue. If some black youths are antagonistic to unions it is because of what they see of “unionism.” What should a black youth think when he finds the doors of apprenticeship closed to him in the building trades and many other fields?

Rustin also serves the AFL-CIO bureaucracy by lumping separatist and anti-white elements among the black people with the majority of progressive militants who favor black-white unity, a struggle against discrimination within the existing mass unions and mass struggles that unite the entire black community and many whites around the issues affecting the black people. A reprint of Rustin's *Harper's* article was circulated by the AFL-CIO's civil rights department with a covering letter by Don Slaiman, the director (Feb. 20, 1970) recommending it as a “most thoughtful” article on the subject.

The rise of the black caucus movement and the activities of black workers in trade union struggles, has apparently been a source of worry for the AFL-CIO leaders and their helpers like Bayard Rustin. This worry was also shared by the rabidly anti-union Right to Work Committee that obtained the services of a black man and a Chicano for a press conference in Washington in 1969 announcing an “independent” anti-union movement of black and brown workers. That effort got no further than a vain attempt to break the grape strike.

Notwithstanding such efforts, the black caucus trend is growing and will continue to grow because there is a need for it. The Na-

tional Ad Hoc Committee of Concerned Steelworkers, based on black groups in many locals of the steel union across the country, has been functioning for a number of years, pressing for black representation, especially in the top leadership; elimination of discriminatory job progression lines, etc. Black caucuses are well established in many locals of the United Automobile Workers. A substantial and most active part of the Rank and File Conference in Chicago June 26-27 was of black caucus groups.

There is also increasing evidence of a developing rank and file movement among members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. That union's top and middle-level leadership is entirely white and elderly, with just one woman. But in the New York area where half of the 450,000 members are concentrated, a recent Equal Employment Opportunity Commission showed 36.8 percent Spanish speaking and 12.6 percent black members, of whom about 80 percent are women. (*N.Y. Times*, Feb. 9, 1971)

The typical black caucus is not a separatist group. It is a group that usually seeks unity with others in support of its demands. It is usually progressively inclined because, of necessity, it combats racism and the reactionary influences that tolerate racism. Recognition and close cooperation with such groups is an elementary principle of a progressive rank and file group in a shop or union.

On Discrimination Against Women

The traditional exclusionism of some of the older unions that has merged with racially discriminatory practices is also reflected in the AFL-CIO's position toward women workers. As on civil rights, the AFL-CIO has plenty of resolutions on file on the rights of women. The government's latest union directory put the number of women in unions at 3.9 million, about a fifth of the country's total union membership, but only an eighth of the 31 million working women. The number of women in the labor force is increasing steadily. Notwithstanding the resolutions, there is not much action to combat discrimination against women.

Since the birth of the AFL in 1881, there has never been a woman on its executive council. There is not one woman international or national president of a union and not a half dozen in top office of all affiliates of the AFL-CIO. The 1969 convention of the AFL-CIO had even fewer women delegates than black. *The government's labor directory listing 1,200 names of officers and administrative persons in the general offices of all the U.S. unions and heads of state labor bodies, contains just 56 names of women, most of them appointees in subordinate technical positions.* Unions like

the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the hotel, textile, bookbinders, office workers and other unions in which women are the majority, as in Beirne's union, have no women in top office or just one token woman on the board. The ILGWU, with 364,000 women of 455,000 members, has one woman on its board of 24 members. The situation is not much better at the middle level of leadership.

The stock excuse from labor leaders is that women are too much occupied with children and home affairs and may be drawn away for periods to give birth. There is often more cynicism than substance in these excuses. We have men in union leadership with an average age level that is higher than in any field of American life. But we don't see many women in their fifties or older, not likely to be tied up with small children.

Nor has much been done by unions to lighten the burden of a working mother. *It is in the younger years, when women are likely to be occupied with the care of small children, that their leadership abilities show up best and need encouragement, if they are not to be lost to a union, as most often happens.* In 1969 the Supreme Court approved an Amalgamated Clothing Workers contract providing for employer funding for child care centers for their women employees in Baltimore. Since then unions showed some interest and moves also began in Congress for government programs to expand child care centers. For a quarter of a century the trade unions did not challenge a Taft-Hartley Law provision used to bar employer funds for such purposes.

This partly explains why the United States is the most backward country on child care centers. The UAW's resolution on women workers noted that a 1965 survey showed only six percent of U.S. children under six of working mothers, and only one percent of children aged six to 11, received some sort of group care.

The pressure for child care centers has increased recently as the number of families headed by women increased. The Department of Labor (press release, April 30, 1971, New York regional office) found on the basis of the 1970 census that the number of families headed by women increased by 24 percent during the last decade although the number of families in general rose by only 14 percent. Of the total of 5.6 million such families, a third are classed by the government at a poverty level, although the general U.S. poverty level, says the government, is 10 percent of the families.

The black and Spanish-speaking families were hardest hit in this 1960-70 decade of "longest prosperity." The number of black families headed by women grew by 47 percent in the decade, the survey showed. Half of the families headed by black women are in poverty compared to a 25 percent rate among the white.

Women in such positions, many of them widows or deserted, are especially in need of child care centers to be off welfare rolls, and they are especially in need of union defense of their rights and their jobs against the discriminatory practices of employers who seek to exploit their plight. The UAW's 1970 convention resolution on women observed that "roughly 25 percent" of the complaints filed with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission were on discrimination based on sex.

In the recent period there has been a marked increase of activity for women's rights, some of it in the unions. The UAW noted that even women's caucuses have been formed in some organizations. Contracts of most unions still ignore issues affecting women, like protection of women's job rights and seniority standing during maternity leave; employer-financed child care centers, enforcement of existing laws protecting women in certain occupations and many other such problems. No less important, however, is the urgency of turning the trade union movement into a movement of men AND women, black AND white, from the rank and file level to the top. *Only a trade union that includes women and non-white persons in its leadership can give real leadership on the problems affecting those most victimized by discrimination.*

Aggressive and active committees of women in unions can do much to make the trade unions "women conscious." Many union constitutions or rules provide for such committees. But in too many situations the rule isn't followed or nothing is done to make it possible for women to participate in such bodies. There are a number of unions that are relatively more advanced on the problems of women. The unaffiliated United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, the AFL-CIO's International Union of Electrical Workers and the UAW even hold annual conferences on problems of women and have full-time directors of a women's department.

CHAPTER IX

ON INTELLECTUALS AND YOUTH

The trade union movement has a long history of alienation from the sectors of the population in the academic and other professions, the arts, the sciences and students and working youth. The cynical attitude some union leaders display towards intellectuals and students hardly helps to give labor a popular image. This troubles many in the ranks of labor, including even leaders not noted for progressivism, because the trend of events makes a close relation with intellectuals and youth not only desirable but imperative.

Beirne's book recognizes the alienation in a chapter on "Labor and the Intellectuals" that also deals with the youth rebellion. Gus Tyler's book, *The Labor Revolution*, is mainly an appeal to intellectuals and students to come closer to the AFL-CIO. Much more is involved than just the attitude of the unions to intellectuals and young people. Involved is the key question of organized labor's relation with all its natural allies—or who should be its allies. They are the most articulate sector of the population, those most active and dynamic in social and political movements. Take any urban center: influential in the communities are those in the area's campuses, and the scientists, artists, entertainers, writers, TV personalities and leaders of community organizations. This intellectual community usually channels its influence through the peace, anti-discrimination, anti-poverty and progressive legislative efforts, and lately the movement for clear air and water.

Large numbers of youth who flow into work places today come from colleges or from high schools. They bring with them the progressivism and rebellious spirit so widespread among students today. The heavy enrollment in colleges in recent years is due both to the requirement of higher education in many of the new occupations that came with the technological revolution and to the fact that many young people would rather go to college than Vietnam.

Enrollment in colleges rose from 4,643,000 in 1964 to 7,435,000 in 1968. It is quite apparent that a large percentage of the college graduates do not wind up in higher-paid professions. Many get into occupations rated at considerably less than "middle-class" earnings, and join unions. Many are aggressive, and are not content to have

their dues checked off and say nothing. They are likely to be vigorous and fluent critics and do not easily yield to union rules and restrictions built up through decades of bureaucratic control.

Some labor leaders are crying bitterly over problems with rebellious young workers and the fast-changing composition of union membership. The work force is getting younger, as already noted in reference to the AFL-CIO's Kraft survey. A large part of this younger membership is not attracted to the narrowness of the official AFL-CIO policy, support of the Indochina war, or the indifference to life in the ghettos or discriminatory policies towards black and brown workers. The younger workers are pressing for demands closest to the needs of the youth and newly-formed families. The young black worker is even more aggressive. He refuses to take for granted the lot of his parents.

George Meany frequently blurts out remarks about students and intellectuals that make many unionists ashamed. In a speech in 1965, for example, as he sneered at the peace movement, especially the active roll of university faculties and scientists, he referred to them as "the intellectual jitterbugs."

In 1969, when FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and employer associations initiated a drive against the "summer work-in" program of a section of the Students for Democratic Society, designed to advance a student-worker alliance, Meany issued a statement declaring that the workers in the shops would handle the students roughly. Other union officials quickly followed with similar statements to meet the "conspiracy."

At the August 28, 1969, interview on the occasion of his 75th birthday, Meany was asked if something could be done about the fact that a great many young people were either suspicious or "downright openly hostile" to unions. He replied, "I don't and I don't spend any time worrying about it because I don't think there is any justification for it." When pressed to reply whether he thought "there should be some special steps to awaken the interest of young people in the labor movement," he said flatly, "No." (From the transcript of the interview released by AFL-CIO).

Questioned on the AFL-CIO's position on the black militants, Meany replied: "As far as the black militants are concerned, I don't think some of them want improvement. I think they want the issue. I think they want to be militant. I think they want to demonstrate. I don't know what I can do for them."

At the 1965 convention of the AFL-CIO in San Francisco when a number of students marched into the gallery and quietly sat down to listen to a debate on the Vietnam resolution, Meany angrily ordered the sergeant-at-arms to "get those kookies out of here."

Worried Over Critics

In his book, Beirne wrote that the "most vocal" and to many unionists the "most painful" criticism, comes from "segments of the academic and intellectual community." Most irritating to Beirne is the criticism that the AFL-CIO shows little "imagination."

"They remember," he wrote, "the ringing declarations of high purpose, the eloquence of those who inspired audiences on street corners and at plant gates, the charisma of legendary leaders in leather jackets. They juxtapose their memories with the labor movement of today and they despair—loudly. I am not scoffing at all this. It is understandable and tender, like one's memory of a first puppy love." (p. 134)

The change had to come, Beirne went on, because "many of the high purposes of 30 years ago have been largely fulfilled. There is far less need of soap-box exhortations. Wage earners in general are part of the affluent society, not members of an uninstitutionalized poverty order."

Yes, while the so-called leather-jacket brigades were in their first "puppy-love stage" and soap-boxed plant gates in a stormy upsurge that lifted union membership four-fold almost overnight, Beirne was still in love with "Ma Bell" as head of its company union.

"Critics say," complains Beirne, "that leaders today are old, apathetic, insensitive to the times and too concerned with their personal perquisites; that they have lost touch with the membership, and run their organizations like personal fiefs." He seems to blame those critics for the fact that "in at least four major national unions, over the last few years, incumbent presidents who are far short of retirement age were defeated by their constituents." He doesn't seem to give credit to the rank and file voters for doing some thinking. It's those outside "intellectuals" who make trouble. Beirne doesn't explain why a referendum of the million-member steel union gave 41 percent of the ballots to an opponent of I. W. Abel, the president, an opponent who was totally unknown and was an employee of the legal department in the union's general office.

Beirne also attributes the widespread criticism of the fantastically high salaries of some labor leaders to the intellectuals and students. Defending high salaries, Beirne argues the members of the unions want their leaders "to look and act the equal of their boss." And he adds, "No one goes to meet the President of the United States or head of U.S. Steel in a leather jacket." He explains, "If we accept unions as partners in a pluralistic society, rather than as the spearhead of the revolution, the union leaders and their staff must

be able to meet on an equal footing with their management and government counterparts."

Now it is clear. The critics are advocates of "revolution" and don't favor labor's partnership in a "pluralistic" society. As right-wingers usually do, Beirne takes refuge in red-baiting and puts the issue as "revolution" versus "partnership" with employers. This is absolutely false. The real issue is the growing pressure for a policy that would make the labor movement more effective in meeting the new conditions in the country and the world, to bring real democracy in union ranks and revitalize and renovate much of the leadership. Not only advocates of "revolution" but a far broader segment of the labor movement, counting millions of members (as we shall see in later chapters) is pressing for such revitalization. They are the real target of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy for whom Beirne argues.

No one is advocating leather jackets, although such clothing on a negotiator or a visitor to the White House wouldn't affect a penny in a union contract or soften in the slightest the President's anti-union policy. Why doesn't Beirne answer some of the real questions raised by critics? *Why no comment on the fact that the average age of the 35-member executive council of the AFL-CIO is in the mid-sixties. Only one member was slightly below 50 at the 1969 convention.*

Age, of course, should not be the basis for judging a labor leader's qualifications. But on the basis of the record of the AFL-CIO and of the old AFL, is it not in place to suggest that the executive council has, in fact, enforced the rule that a person below 50 cannot qualify for even junior membership in that august body. I checked the ages of all 29 members of the executive council at the 1969 convention and found the average ran in the upper sixties. With two octogenarians off since then and with some "youths" in the fifties added with enlargement of the council to 35 at the 1969 convention, the age average dropped only slightly. *Why aren't young men AND women permitted to get on the council?* The story is much the same in the AFL-CIO state and city bodies, because they follow the top pattern.

The virtual exclusion of younger people from leadership limits the flow of new ideas and vigor into the leading bodies. That was the problem in the thirties when the rising CIO challenged the old guard AFL leadership. *Checking the ages of the presidents of the CIO unions in the formative and most dynamic stage, the 1937-39 period, I found the majority ranged in age from 26 to 35. Ages of associate officers ran even lower. They led the CIO unions when they stormed the citadels of the strongest anti-union corporations in the country.*

How It Was in the 30's

Those not familiar with labor history may be surprised to learn that in the stormy thirties there was a different relationship between the rising CIO and the country's intellectuals and students. It was, in fact, the militancy of the workers and the new unionism of that period that inspired a progressive trend in all intellectual spheres. Men and women in the academic professions, scientists, actors, artists, authors, flocked to the fields of labor struggle. They not only sympathized with the rising movement but obtained inspiration from it for song, literature and some of the finest films the U.S. ever produced. Many became part of the new movement as organizers, editors, researchers, economists. Students came in the thousands as volunteer organizers and were in the thick of the struggles.

The rising new movement welcomed those allies because their help was invaluable. Gus Tyler also recalls the thirties, and he sees the inflow of the radicalized youth of that day in a positive light. Communist, Socialist and other youths on the left came in as supporters of the labor movement, Tyler observes, and they were conscious of its objectives. Himself a product of the Socialist Party's youth (a little on the left side in the thirties) Tyler's origin was not in a company union. But while he sees the youth and intellectuals of the thirties in a positive light, his book is mostly a criticism of the youth and intellectuals of today. He finds them antagonistic to the labor movement. He doesn't like what he sees in the campuses of today, as may be expected from an appointee to an ILGWU position.

Tyler and Beirne come basically to the same conclusion on conditions today as they defend the AFL-CIO hierarchy. Both see a trend toward a sort of efficiency unionism, with organizations operating much like the home offices and branches of big insurance companies, with experts running affairs FOR the membership, with the rank and file left with little more than the obligation to pay dues. Tyler sees such a "Labor Revolution" as the response to the technological revolution. Beirne sees a labor official as much like an executive of a corporation who "must be surrounded by economists, lawyers, public relations men, statisticians, accountants, social security and insurance specialists, teachers, recreation directors and geriatrists." Tyler's book is mostly an appeal to intellectuals to come to the "House of Labor" where opportunities for intellectuals will widen.

Essentially, both Tyler and Beirne are inviting intellectuals and students to come in on labor bureaucracy's terms—for that partnership with employers and the government in "pluralistic" happiness. They suggest nothing that labor's leadership ought to do to attract

such alliance. It is noteworthy that in his book Tyler ignores entirely the key issues chiefly responsible for the alienation of intellectuals, students and most liberals from the AFL-CIO. *They are the AFL-CIO's attachment to the coldwar policy and support of the Indochina war; discrimination that is still practiced in some of the major unions and the AFL-CIO leadership's indifference to violation of civil liberties.* This is understandable. Tyler's political godfather was David Dubinsky, whose group has been a major prop for Meany's circle. Beirne's line differs only in that he used the old red-baiting herring against intellectuals and students and defends the AFL-CIO hawkish policy. They both suggest nothing more than a *welcome mat to intellectuals to come in and help give the AFL-CIO a "new look."*

The alienation of intellectuals and students has bothered some labor leaders for years. An example was an address by Harry Van Arsdale, president of the New York Central Labor Council, at the annual dinner of Columbia University Seminars on April 26, 1961, that was printed in the May 15, 1961 issue of the *Electrical Union World*, the paper of his union, Local 3, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

"American labor is facing a crisis," Van Arsdale said, as he pictured conditions that were only a moderate preview of things to come. Recalling the alliance with the intellectual community in the thirties, he went on:

"This alliance had enormous influence on public opinion and helped make possible the growth and acceptance of trade unionism in America. . . . We know that some of these intellectuals measured the quality of liberalism by its unswerving adherence to Communist doctrine and Soviet world ambitions. Nevertheless, organized labor learned a great deal from its friends and supporters in the universities. . . . By the end of the war this alliance had crumbled. Today, with the exception of those intellectuals who specialize in labor-management relations, the intellectual force of America feels as alienated from the labor movement as the labor movement feels alienated from the intellectuals. However, I think, the time has come to see if the breach between us can be repaired, not in the name of some doctrinaire philosophy or vague ethic, but because this isolation, this sulking in our split-level tents, is a luxury we can no longer afford."

Van Arsdale concluded with an impassioned "we need you and I tell you you need us," and he set as an objective to "give purpose anew to so many young people who are today rebels without a cause." His remarks almost a decade ago are interesting on a number of grounds. He concedes that the intellectuals on the left were a source of strength and vitality to the labor movement of the

thirties. He observed that labor faces a crisis and he saw the need of restoring an alliance with the intellectual community. He recognized in 1961 that a youth rebellion was in the making, but he saw it as "without a cause."

Beirne, Tyler and Van Arsdale, while conceding that the intellectuals and students of the left were an important influence in the upsurge of the thirties, commit the fatal error, however, of evading an examination of why and where those forces gave their support. That is why they ignore the essence of the problem as it applies today.

The intellectuals of the thirties were not in alliance with the leaders of *all* labor groups in the country. They differentiated sharply between the groups around the then AFL president William Green, boss William Hutcheson of the building trades, and George Meany, Joseph Frey and other of the conservative old guard who fought tenaciously to save the status quo, on the one hand, and the younger progressive forces on the other hand that led the hunger marches and the unemployed movement and later, through the CIO, attacked the open shop fortresses. Far from cooperating with the Greens and Meanys, the intellectuals and student forces fought them mercilessly.

What were the most salient characteristics of the active intellectuals and the "liberals," as progressive activists are usually labeled, during the thirties? They were active against the menace of fascism, usually through the League Against War and Fascism, the biggest and broadest movement in the field led by the left. They fought the repressive measures used against the protesters of that time. They encouraged the rising mass movement of the unemployed black people who were hardest hit during the great depression. They were most sympathetic to the struggles of the unemployed and the unorganized lowest paid workers and for that reason were close to the CIO and its drives to organize the mass production and basic industries.

While Beirne, Tyler and Van Arsdale have acknowledged that Communist and other left influence was strong among the intellectuals of the thirties, they overlooked another important factor. There was then a division among the Socialist Party-influenced intellectuals. On the one hand were those who were involved actively in struggle and favored united front relations with the Communists in the unemployed, labor, anti-war and anti-fascist and youth movements of that time; on the other hand, the right wing, those close to some labor bureaucracies, notably of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and allied groups, opposed such a united front and the CIO.

It was the alliance between the Communists and left Socialists

that was the key in the great advance of that period and the progressive content of the CIO's early years as well as in the role of the intellectuals of that time. Van Arsdale's own history confirms that fact. As a developing young leader of IBEW, Local 3, backed by a rank and file movement, Van Arsdale even went to the Soviet Union in 1934 as a member of a workers' delegation. He returned to give a glowing report to mass meetings. Tyler too, as a leader of the Socialist Party's youth organizations, was for a while in a united front relationship with the Young Communist League that made possible the strong youth movement of workers and students in the thirties.

What are the common characteristics of the active intellectuals and youth in the present period? They are active against the U.S. war in Indochina. They are active participants in the black liberation movement. They support all activities against poverty and hunger. They are critical of the AFL-CIO's leadership because it continues to neglect the millions of still unorganized low-paid workers, harbors racism in some unions and is still indifferent to repression against protesters, still afraid of younger leaders. The active intellectuals today are turning sympathetically towards unions and struggles that are moving away from the Meany policies. *There is a close parallel in the political orientation and the approach to issues we saw among intellectuals of those thirties and those we see today.*

"Rebels without a cause"? That is how it looked to Van Arsdale in 1961. He surely cannot say that today. There are, as we shall see later, some confusing and divisive influences within the left and on the campuses. But only the blind and deaf can fail to recognize the overall common approach of the left and radicals generally, in line with the characteristics we noted. It is those characteristics that men like Van Arsdale must take into account, if they are really serious about the "alliance." Van Arsdale won't get very far with the approach he outlined in the 1961 speech when he invited intellectuals to come in on a perspective of partnership with the top labor bureaucracy for a policy of global war on Communism, the very policy that was most responsible for the alienation of students and intellectuals.

A significant step towards reversing the alienation trend came at a conference of prominent scientists and professors, including several Nobel laureates with a number of leading union representatives, at Cambridge, Mass., Oct. 16, 1970. A statement they signed declared that "progressive elements" of universities and labor unions should join to "achieve common social and political objectives." Labor participants included Harold Gibbons, vice-president of the Teamsters, and Leonard Woodcock, president of the UAW. Jerry

Wurf, president of the State, County and Municipal Employees called the conference a "brilliant beginning," according to the *New York Times* of Oct. 18, 1970.

The statement, signed also by representatives of several student organizations, said, "The most urgent concerns of the American workers—among them peace, racial justice, job security, decent environments in which to work and live, adequate medical care and social security, housing, schools, stable prices—all represent equally the needs of students and faculty members.

"The current attacks on students, universities and intellectuals are only the spearhead of a general offensive against all progressive forces in our country, among which organized labor is a major component. Suppression of dissent on the campuses will inevitably lead to the abridgement of the rights of all ordinary American citizens."

With George Wald, the biologist and Nobel prize winner, its chief spokesman, the group moved to establish branches across the country.

CHAPTER X

LABOR AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The oldest trade unionist cannot remember a time when the bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO, and of the AFL prior to the 1955 merger, was as unpopular as it is today with its members and the public at large. The greatest contributor to that unhappy state has been the official position of the federation in support of the U.S. wars in Asia and of other global operations that tied the trade unions to a partnership with American imperialism for so-called "world leadership."

The sweeping movement for peace and immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from Indochina has forced even many in Congress who backed the Vietnam policy to shift position. But the leaders of the AFL-CIO have remained silent and unmovable from the position that has made them known as the most hawkish of the hawks. At a press conference during the mid-summer sessions of the AFL-CIO executive council meeting in Chicago in August, 1970, Meany summarized the Nixon administration's 18 months in office as "good" on foreign affairs but not on domestic problems.

When popular anger and demonstrations were at a high point over U.S. invasion of Cambodia and the killing of four students at Kent, Ohio, Meany issued a statement endorsing the President's invasion order and said that "nine tenths" of the 35-member executive council took such a position. (*N.Y. Times*, May 13, 1970). Meany made his announcement on May 12 as he met with President Nixon at AFL-CIO headquarters. The President took the unusual walk to the AFL-CIO to appeal to the Meany group to do something in the way of counter-demonstrations to show "labor's" support of the Indochina war escalation. Meany and Nixon conferred three days after a mob of "hard hats" on construction jobs beat up students holding an anti-war demonstration on Wall Street near where they were working.

The real purpose of the meeting became apparent a week later when the officials of the New York Building and Construction Trades Council staged a flag-waving parade in which the ultra-rightist groups participated, to show support for the Cambodia invasion. A short time later, similar parades were staged in St. Louis and Baltimore. But the counter movement did not spread beyond those cities.

On the other hand, many major unions, some for the first time, denounced the invasion. Among those unions were a number headed by members of the AFL-CIO's executive council. Newspapers across the country carried large ads signed by hundreds of local and regional labor officials protesting the Cambodia invasion. Among them was the famed "We Have Had It" ad in the San Francisco press signed by 450 local and regional labor officials of the Bay area, with the building trades heavily represented.

In response to the President's request that Meany and associates do something to show their support of the war, the AFL-CIO leaders delivered the only kind of action they could—gangster-like violence. They counted on the craftist, racist-influenced, leadership of the building trades, their major base.

The plan which apparently figured in the Meany-Nixon discussion on May 12 boomeranged, however. The spectacle of union men beating up students and of a flag-waving parade arranged with the cooperation of the contractors who gave the workers time off, into which poured Birchites and the assortment of other neo-fascist groups, was more than most unionists could take. This is why the plan for parades across the country showing "labor support" for Nixon fizzled. The President tried to stimulate the trend some days after the New York parade with a White House invitation to the union officers who organized it. The leaders presented a hard hat to Mr. Nixon and he had high praise for the group. But this bit of much-publicized Madison Avenue didn't bring the desired result.

The higher level of the peace movement in the trade unions marked a big change from the earlier cold war days. As late as December, 1965, at the AFL-CIO convention in San Francisco, the bureaucracy was able to maneuver a "unanimous" approval of a resolution in support of the Vietnam policy although Emil Mazey, secretary-treasurer of the UAW, openly differed with Walter Reuther's support of that resolution in a speech on the convention floor. But soon after, evidence mounted rapidly of the bankruptcy of that position as the AFL-CIO found itself alienated from sections of the population that are usually its allies. The federation's leaders found themselves allied with reactionary sabre-rattlers of the Wallace stripe. The position became increasingly uncomfortable for many union leaders. Some months after the San Francisco convention, the UAW, including Reuther, began to steer a course away from the Meany position.

Since the days of Samuel Gompers, "labor's" foreign policy position has been solely a prerogative of the federation's president. There never was anything like a membership referendum or a discussion in the federation on matters related to foreign policy, war or peace. Conventions consist entirely of top officials of the unions

represented. Such statements on international subjects as are adopted at conventions are prepared by a handful of men in the secrecy of the International Affairs Department. The membership of unions can make its position known only through rank and file initiatives or through occasional surveys of pollsters. In such tests, the views of unionists were found to be almost the same as those of the general public, more and more against the Vietnam war.

By early 1969, a mass trend for peace began to break through the cold war lines. The four-million-member Alliance for Labor Action, including the UAW and the Teamsters, the two largest unions in the country, took a forthright position for an end to the war and to skyrocketing military expenditures. The ALA endorsed, through newspaper ads, the gigantic moratorium peace demonstrations in Washington and across the country in the fall of 1969.

The major contributor to the change was the pressure of economic and social conditions due to the insatiable maw that the war and the Pentagon have become, especially the galloping inflation that has been eating heavily into the wage dollar. Economic and social programs projected at labor conventions have become worthless because their realization isn't even conceivable while the country's resources are poured out for war and anti-ballistic missiles (ABM) systems. It was from this self-interest standpoint that much of the trade union movement has been led to shift officially to a policy of peace. The realization is growing that the Meany position of criticism of the Nixon policy on domestic issues and praise for his war position is a contradiction. (For details see Philip Foner's *American Labor and the Indochina War*, International Publishers, New York, 1971.)

When it became clear to the general public that the war in Indochina was a "no win" war, the question usually heard from many who backed the war was, "How did we get ourselves into such a mess?" There is a reluctance to recognize the obvious, that a policy for world domination—imperialism—is the root cause. But the parallel key question in the trade unions is how did labor get itself into the strange position of partnership with the imperialists and their most rabid sabre rattlers? We are back to the same answer that applies to all other issues we reviewed in this book. If the policy is to make trade unions partners to capitalism, then it inevitably leads to partnership with imperialism and all its crimes against people at home and abroad. Thereby the AFL-CIO shares the guilt, in the eyes of many people.

The elements of that policy of partnership with imperialism were already apparent at the turn of the century when Gompers and his associates backed the Spanish-American war of conquest. It developed in stages, with the AFL bureaucracy and later the AFL-CIO,

nursing the view that the trade unions could get certain rights and privileges if they supported capitalism on international relations. The approach was much like the 19th century position of some heads of unions in Britain and in other colonial powers: that by partnership with their imperialists for colonial conquest in the name of "civilization" and white supremacy, their members would reap some extra crumbs at home. During the heyday of British colonialism, some British workers, mainly in the skilled crafts, actually did reap some benefits from that relationship. The old AFL similarly, by tenaciously combatting industrial unionism and holding off organization of the major monopoly industries, sought privileges and benefits for its craft unions. In effect, benefits were sought at the expense not only of the colonial and semi-colonial subject people, but also of unorganized mass production workers, particularly the black and brown most exploited workers.

The modern aspect of this unholy partnership can be said to have had its beginning after the surrender of the Nazis and only a few days before Japan was preparing to surrender, when President Harry Truman needlessly and most cruelly fired the opening shot for the "American Century" with the atom-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The whole world now knows that this demonstration of imperialist firepower was as stupid as it was murderous, although the continuers of the Truman-Churchill cold war policy are still betting on some exclusive weaponry. The leaders of the AFL, and soon after the CIO, again went for a partnership with imperialist policy. And they went the whole hog. They and their propaganda machine sold the workers the dream that with U.S. "world leadership" would come that wonderful postwar world that was so much the talk in labor ranks during the war. A drive began to line up the unions for the "world leadership" march. Full support was given the campaign against "communism" through loyalty oaths and laws against alleged subversion. Persons on the left, or alleged to be on the left, were screened out of many industries; "Red-listing" of workers, through special agencies working for employers with the cooperation of the FBI and through jailing of Communists and many others for entertaining "dangerous" thoughts, was part and parcel of this "partnership."

Within the CIO, which at first showed some resistance to the cold war campaign, the drive took the form of forcing a split on the issue of "Communist infiltration" and opposition to the U.S. policy. Eventually that effort resulted in the expulsion of unions with a million members on grounds of left leadership and refusal to support Truman's re-election.

The first casualty of the coldwar partnership was the post-war

organizing drive. All energy and attention had to go to saving the world from "communism" and smashing the expelled unions. Active unionists were expelled and hounded out of the labor movement and industries. Breaking of a strike of a progressive-led union was considered a good deed. This led to conflicts between the AFL and the CIO, too, along similar cannibalistic lines. Arthur Goldberg, who as the CIO's attorney braintrusted the expulsion policy in 1949 and was termed the "architect" of the 1955 merger, argued that unity would strengthen labor's role against "communism." In his book, "AFL-CIO Labor United" (McGraw Hill, 1956) Goldberg saw "more determined action to stamp out communism" as one of the goals of the merger.

Goldberg, who later was to transform himself into a dove in his campaign for the New York governorship in 1970, earned the trust of U.S. imperialism for his service in splitting the CIO and lining it up for the U.S. world policeman role. His service continued when he mediated the merger of 1955, and in his role as Secretary of Labor in 1960 and as Ambassador to the United Nations.

A Labor Cover for the CIA

The most shameful part of the generation of labor retreat and stagnation was the task given labor within the cold war partnership of providing a trade union cover for Central Intelligence Agency operations abroad. The old AFL had already been involved substantially with such activities in earlier years under the direction of Matthew Woll who was Sam Gompers' international affairs man. The establishment of the CIA as a super-spy and subversion agency in the "world leadership" drive of the U.S. brought into prominence Jay Lovestone, a renegade from Communism since 1929. Lovestone conducted a stable of anti-Soviet operatives whose services were highly valued in that campaign.

Matthew Woll, and Meany, and David Dubinsky of the ILGWU, their financial sugar-daddy, worked as a team in the business of tying the unions to the chariot of U.S. imperialism. They brought Lovestone into the federation's apparatus. Actually, Lovestone became the CIA's contact man in union ranks. His operations in the AFL-CIO were pretty much in the shadows, but his authority grew even when he held no formal post. Eventually much publicity broke through on the high value the State Department put on his work as an informant. When the policy of naming labor attaches to embassies abroad was inaugurated, it was Lovestone who usually passed on the qualifications of candidates and, according to some reports, he even had what amounts to a veto on the selections to such posts.

Despite the condition set in the merger agreement of 1955 that Lovestone not be in the International Affairs Department of the united labor body, Meany eventually drew him in, and before long Lovestone was director of the department, a post he still holds at this writing. Lovestone's operations came to full public view during the CIA scandal of 1966-67, when the CIA's system of financing labor, student, cultural and other organizations through dummy foundations was exposed. The disclosure of how the AFL-CIO and a number of affiliates received large sums through these foundations fronting for the CIA caused new tensions within the AFL-CIO and between the AFL-CIO leadership and the affiliates of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. The AFL-CIO and its operatives under Lovestone had used much of the ICFTU's apparatus as channels for CIA work in Latin American and other areas. This caused embarrassment to unions of other lands and cast suspicion on relations with AFL-CIO representatives.

The most revealing story of the way the CIA used labor agents was told by Thomas Braden in the May 20, 1967, issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* in an article titled "I am Glad the CIA is 'Immoral'." Braden, now a newspaper columnist, was in 1950-54 special assistant to Allan W. Dulles, then director of the CIA and the agency's reputed "father." Braden boasted that it was he who conceived the idea of using and financing existing or newly created organizations to serve as covers for the CIA.

"On the desk in front of me as I write these lines is a creased yellow paper," wrote Braden. "It bears the following inscription in pencil, 'Received from Warren G. Haskins \$15,000, (signed) Norris A. Gambo.'"

"I went in search of this paper on the day the newspapers disclosed the 'scandal' of the Central Intelligence Agency's connections with American students and labor leaders. . . . I was Warren G. Haskins. Norris A. Gambo was Irving Brown of the American Federation of Labor. The \$15,000 was from the vaults of the CIA, and the little piece of yellow paper is the last memento I possess of a vast and secret operation. . . .

"He needed it to pay off the strong arm squads in Mediterranean ports so that American supplies can be unloaded against the opposition of Communist dock workers. It was also my idea to give cash, along with advice, to other labor leaders, to students, professors and others who could help the United States in the battle with Communist fronts."

Braden described how he set up a similar machinery of students. He claimed credit for the establishment of the Congress for Cultural Freedom with headquarters in Paris through which many

persons in the academic, literary and art professions were trapped into doing the CIA's work.

"Thus the international organization division of the CIA was born," bragged Braden in his article.

Labor was the big problem, Braden went on, and it was a source of considerable worry in the CIA. He pictured the situation in France, Italy and other lands, where a powerful postwar left emerged and became influential on policies affecting world relations. The CIA's big problem was how to halt the trend and clear the way for the U.S. Marshall Plan.

"Into the crisis stepped Lovestone and his assistant, Irving Brown," wrote Braden. "With funds from Dubinsky's union they organized Force Ouvriere, a non-Communist union. When they ran out of money they applied to the CIA. Thus began the secret subsidy of free trade unions which soon spread to Italy."

Braden showered high praise on Lovestone because the CIA didn't have to advise him on how to do things. Lovestone knew how to place the CIA's money in the hands of people who could be most effective in wrecking the unions on the CIA's target list.

"We knew that he was paying them nearly \$2,000,000 annually," wrote Braden. "Lovestone had an enormous grasp of intelligence operations." But at times there was worry in the CIA's command that the enormous sums of money didn't get to the right places, Braden went on. So the CIA went to Lovestone's superiors, which of course meant Meany, Woll and Dubinsky, and complained that no accounting was given of the expenditures.

"Lovestone and his bunch are doing a good job. What more do you want?" was the reply to the CIA. Braden didn't indicate which of the three "superiors" gave that reply.

"From the Italian and French experience, we set up networks of other international organizations," boasted Braden, as he pictured the expansion of the CIA's business of wrecking unions in Latin America, Asia and Europe that wouldn't play ball with it.

(For a detailed account of the CIO's use of labor agents in the 1954 overthrow of a progressive Guatemala government; operations in Indonesia, Iran, British Guiana—now Guyana, independent, in Cuba in the Bay of Pigs operation, and in Africa and Asia, see "CIA and American Labor" by George Morris, International Publishers, New York, 1966).

In time the CIA's hand became so visible in the AFL-CIO's operations that the conflict between the AFL-CIO leaders and the ICFTU sharpened from conference to conference. The ICFTU leaders objected to the AFL-CIO's separate international machinery

that was causing them embarrassment. Also, as the years passed, the idea of making anti-Communism the major task of an international labor organization became less and less acceptable even to some of the outspokenly anti-Communist leaders of some European unions. More and more delegations of unions, including ICFTU affiliates, visited the Soviet Union and other socialist lands as guests of their unions in a spirit of fraternal relations. The more difficult it became for Lovestone's machinery to direct its operations through ICFTU channels, the greater was the AFL-CIO's emphasis on its own CIA-financed operations.

The evidence indicates that leaders of only several unions of the AFL-CIO lent their international affairs departments to coordination by the Lovestone office with CIA projects. Most prominent in that group were Beirne's telephone union; former leaders of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; the Retail Clerks International Association, then headed by James Suffridge; the State, County and Municipal Employees headed, until he was ousted, by Arnold Zander, and the American Newspaper Guild and the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks. There was also a chain of outfits professing to engage in "labor" research, publishing and similar such enterprises in CIA service.

The Meany-Lovestone "International"

Anticipating an eventual break with the ICFTU, Meany, Lovestone, Bierne and Dubinsky (Woll had died) began in 1962 to build their own "international." They conceived of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), financed through the government's Agency for International Development (AID), and in a smaller part, by the AFL-CIO and the employers who were partners in the venture. With Meany as chairman of AIFLD, Peter Grace, head of W.R. Grace & Co., the giant conglomerate with major interests in Latin America, is chairman of the board. Beirne is the secretary-treasurer. Included in the list of employers who contribute to AIFLD, with many of them on its board, are the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, International Telephone and Telegraph, Pan-American World Airways, Kennecott Copper and others to a total of 80 of the topmost corporations of the United States.

Currently AID's contributions to AIFLD's operations run \$6 million annually. By 1969, AID's total contribution came to \$28,117,767, according to hearings of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee held on Aug. 1, 1969. The AFL-CIO's contribution for the period totaled \$1,460,750, the hearing was told, and the employers' total came to \$1,172,637. AIFLD operates a training school in Mount Royal, Va., for three-month courses for "labor" leadership in Latin American

countries. AIFLD also operates extensions in some Latin American lands, with a staff of some 200 roaming the area in the guise of "educators" and functionaries in AIFLD services.

During the CIA scandal, AIFLD drew the spotlight as the CIA's major conduit to the lands below the Rio Grande.

Some years after AIFLD was formed, the African-American Labor Center (AALC) was formed, with Irving Brown its director in an effort to develop an AIFLD pattern in Africa.

More recently the Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI) was set up with the Saigon and Taiwan "unions" as the initial base, under the directorship of Gerald O'Keefe, who was a leading figure in the squad of AFL-CIO operatives in Guyana for the overthrow of the Cheddi Jagan progressive regime. Meany is also chairman of the African and Asian bodies.

The overall coordinating and contact setup linking the State Department and the AFL-CIO is the Labor Advisory Committee on Foreign Assistance. Meany is also chairman of that body. At the Aug. 1, 1969, hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chairman J. W. Fulbright noted the minutes of a meeting of the advisory committee that showed those in attendance to be Meany, Lovestone, representatives of AIFLD, AALC and AAFLI, several members of the executive council, AFL-CIO, and about a score of officials representing the State Department and its many subdivisions concerned with various operations abroad. Also present was W. A. Boyle, president of the United Mine Workers.

(In addition to my own book, already noted, much is detailed on AFL-CIO activities abroad in cooperation with the CIA in two government publications on hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Aug. 1, 1969, with Meany as a witness. The other is a report of a sub-committee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, then headed by Senator Wayne Morse. It is a study of AIFLD, issued on July 15, 1968, and printed in the *Congressional Record* of Sept. 25, 1968. The latter also contains a report by the U.S. comptroller general who complained that AIFLD expenditures are not detailed or accounted for properly. The book on the Aug. 1, 1969, hearings also contains about a score of articles that appeared in the press on the AFL-CIO activities with the CIA that Fulbright inserted into the record.)

Fulbright Vs. Meany

In his committee's 1969 hearings, Fulbright observed that the bulk of AID funds for so-called "labor progress" abroad was channeled through AFL-CIO operations. He noted that through 1969 the three "institutes" chaired by Meany received \$33 million and,

he added, "for fiscal year 1970 the AID reports that AIFLD will receive \$5.8 million, the AALC \$1.5 million and the AAFLI \$800,000, totaling \$8.1 million." There was a further possibility that the 1970 appropriation would grow by another \$2 million, he noted. (p. 22, of the hearing)

From the published proceedings of the hearing it is apparent that in addition to the Lovestone-directed international affairs department and the International Affairs Committee of the AFL-CIO chaired by Beirne, a number of unions are listed as having "contracts" with AID for finances for unspecified tasks. They include the Retail Clerks International Association, Communication Workers of America, Brotherhood of Railway Clerks and other unions. Fulbright observed that "there are many reports to the effect that these sub-contractors formerly received funds through CIA-sponsored foundations." (p. 22) He inserted into the record several articles published in newspapers and magazines documenting the charge.

To all of Fulbright's efforts to elicit some explanation from Meany of the mass of evidence before the public that the AFL-CIO's role of covering for the CIA continued after the exposure with the funds coming from AID, Meany simply claimed ignorance and boasted of the good service the State Department was getting for its money.

The articles, taking up about half the 126-page book of proceedings, can be judged from such titles as "AID Funds for CIA Projects," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 13, 1969; "Unions turn to AID after CIA pullout," *Washington Post*, April 21, 1969; "Lovestone, Meany & State—American Labor Overseas," *Nation*, Jan. 16, 1967; "American Labor Abroad—Lovestone Diplomacy," *Nation*, July 5, 1965; "The AFL-CIO has its Own CIA—Lovestone's Cold War," *New Republic*, June 25, 1966; "Labor's Conservative Role in Latin America," *Progressive*, November, 1967.

It should be pointed out that the unions the AFL-CIO's international affairs department can count on to enter openly into "contracts" with AID have diminished since the exposures of the CIA. The American Newspaper Guild, whose secretary-treasurer, Charles A. Perlik, Jr., admitted receipt of more than a million dollars from CIA foundations for Guild services abroad, was forced to pull out by a wave of stormy meetings of the locals. Although Perlik is now president of the Guild, the union's policy changed so drastically that its 1970 convention adopted a strong resolution calling for "immediate withdrawal of U.S. armed forces" from Indochina and denouncing the killings of four students at Kent State University and two black students in Jackson, Miss.

One of the first acts of Jerry Wurf when he was elected president of the State, County and Municipal Employees was to dismiss two

CIA agents who had been running the union's international affairs department. That union's convention in 1970 also took a strong stand against the Indochina policy. The change of the presidency in the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers has apparently eliminated that union's prominent role in CIA operations.

The Fulbright committee's hearings also threw some light on the history of AIFLD. Fulbright said AIFLD was established "as a result of some informal talks" in 1961 between Meany, Arthur Goldberg, then Secretary of Labor, and President Kennedy.

Meany, too, cast some light on the history of AIFLD while under questioning by Senator Frank Church of Idaho. When the AFL-CIO executive council planned AIFLD, said Meany, "it was the unanimous decision of our executive council to bring business in."

This was not for the relatively small amount of money that came from the corporations, explained Meany, "but we felt that business should have the same interest in Latin America as we have, that they should want to see safe, sound, free societies there, especially if they were businesses that had some business to do in Latin America." (p. 50)

Ironically, it was Senator Church who, arguing with Meany, suggested that financing by the government "impaired" the influence the AFL-CIO might have with workers abroad. Church thought the greatest influence unions could have abroad "depends on the independence of labor." But Meany replied, "No, I do not think so," and he followed with his usual claim that such arguments come from Communists. He boastfully submitted to the committee a list of 79, mostly of the biggest corporations in the United States, that were backing AIFLD and contributing to it financially.

The hearing was called by Fulbright on Meany's complaint against an earlier statement by Fulbright that the vast funds the government gave to Meany's "institutes" to spend for some vaguely defined "labor" affairs abroad were really a "payoff" for the federation's support of the Indochina war policy. Meany sought an opportunity to reply to this implied charge of bribery. But Meany actually added much to the record to substantiate the charge, though he claimed the AFL-CIO didn't need to be bribed—it rendered the services for the "good of the country."

Fulbright filled the record with much evidence to show what he called "a very close working relationship" between the Meany group and the State Department. He summed up: "Your activities seem to be part of the cold war, or the hot war, (or) both," and, "There was a very cozy relationship between you and the previous (Johnson) administration by which you were given control over some \$5 million a year to do with as you please." To which Meany

replied, "That is the Commie line: that's what the Communists say about us every day."

Hardly Independent

I have gone into the Senate hearing record at some length because for many years Meany's group peddled the falsehood that the unions of socialist countries are "government dominated" and on that ground banned relations with and even visits on invitation of the unions of the Soviet Union and other socialist lands. The AFL-CIO and its unions, on the other hand, were always pictured as independent. This lie was blown sky high with the exposure of the "cozy" relations that exist secretly with the CIA and openly with the State Department and the tremendous sums paid those who engaged in the intelligence operations around the globe.

How can a labor movement be independent on issues affecting war and peace, and in the final analysis be independent on all basic matters, if it gets from \$8 to \$10 million annually (the amount made public) for subversive activities abroad? In the light of these facts, it should not be difficult to see why the top AFL-CIO leaders cling so tenaciously to their coldwar and Indochina policy in defiance of an opposite trend even in their own organizations and among the people generally.

There was another drama at a July 8, 1970, hearing in Washington at which Fulbright delivered a scorching attack on another labor leader, I.W. Abel, head of the Steelworkers, for supporting the Indochina war. The occasion (reported by Tim Wheeler in the July 9, 1970, *Daily World*) was a hearing on the state of the economy. Abel, as head of the AFL-CIO's Economic Policy Committee, read a lengthy document in which he blamed corporation profiteering, high interest rates and other factors for the downward economic trend. Sitting beside Abel was Fred J. Borch, head of General Electric and chairman of the conference of the 100 largest corporations in the U.S. for whom he fronted when GE made its unsuccessful effort to defeat the 13 striking unions of the company's employees. Borch in his testimony gave the familiar big business view of the economy, citing a drop in productivity, high wages, etc.

"I am impressed that neither of you mentioned the greatest cause of the distortion of our economy—the war in Vietnam," said Fulbright.

"Do you know how much we have spent in the military establishment since the end of the Second World War? One thousand billion dollars! Do you think we can spend that much without having an effect on the economy?"

"It's a great puzzle to me, Mr. Abel, that your organization has

been so enthusiastic a supporter of the war."

Then, as if to emphasize the partnership between the top AFL-CIO leaders and big business, Fulbright turned to Borch, whose firm is the fourth largest beneficiary of Pentagon orders and roasted him for having the same view of the war as the AFL-CIO's representative.

In face of the clear record, what do we find in Joe Beirne's apologia for the Meany group? To the surprise of historians, he discovered that the rise of the "modern" trade unions in America "can be traced to World War I." He apparently confuses unions with the company union movement that sprang up in that period in which he was to play a role. The other line of union development of that period, writes Beirne, came with the Russian Revolution, with unions as "instruments of state power." Hence two conflicting lines of unionism.

Beirne, of course, sees things in reverse. The Soviet state is a state mainly of the people who make up the membership of the unions (now counting 80 million). They have no "pluralism" there because they have no employers who own the means of production with whom to "pluralize." Beirne writes (p. 100) that to the Russian Bolsheviks "the American trade unions . . . appeared to be the handmaidens of the bankers and the capitalists." Beirne does not and cannot cite anything in Soviet or any Marxist literature that says "American trade unions" are handmaidens. But he will find it said and written thousands of times that the leaders like Meany, Beirne and their like are certainly such handmaidens. What else could they say in face of what comes off the pens and tongues of men like Meany and Beirne?

Beirne, secretary-treasurer of AIFLD, also fills in some of the history of that outfit. *He claims to be the inventor of AIFLD.* He dates its birth in 1959 when his union set up a school for its functionaries in an old hunting lodge property in Front Royal, Va. It was there, he writes, that the idea was conceived of arranging courses for picked students in Latin American countries to train them for "labor" leadership, U.S. style. So encouraging was the first experience that two years later came the deal with the government and an initial \$396,000 in 1962 that escalated to from \$8 to \$10 million.

It all began, of course, because the internationalist heart of Beirne and his union beat passionately for the workers of Latin America. AIFLD was launched in the spirit of "pluralism," writes Beirne, with the "active participation, personal and financial, of both the federal government and the business community." The first president of AIFLD was Peter Grace, he writes, "whose company was regarded in some circles as the epitome of 'Yankee imperialism.'"

Perhaps it deserved that reputation at one time. I do not think there is anything inherently reprehensible in cooperating with the descendants of capitalists, even with some whose past performance leaves something to be desired, if—for whatever reason—they are now ready to enlist on the side of the angels." (p. 120)

Beirne sees executives of Grace & Co., International Telephone and Telegraph, Pan American Airways and the rest on that AIFLD list as "on the side of the angels" below the Rio Grande. But above that river they are often the targets of some very intense strikes. (Beirne's own union walked out for 12 weeks at Southern Bell, for example.) Why? Is it just a convenient theory to justify a "pluralistic" partnership with imperialists?

Beirne claims the millions spent through AID did wonders in training hundreds of labor leaders for the good of "America." He apparently relies on the ignorance of his readers as to what's really taking place in Latin America. Things simply didn't go according to plan. Senator Fulbright put it this way in the hearing with Meany as the witness, after putting under question the usefulness of the expenditures for AIFLD:

"I think today, surely," he said, "we all admit after the recent experience of the governor of New York, if the Administration did not know before that our relations in Latin America are in a deplorable state, it should now. They are worse than they have been in my memory. His reception indicates that what we have been doing in Latin America is not the right thing."

Fulbright was referring to the tour of Nelson Rockefeller for the government through Latin America and the anti-imperialist demonstrations that greeted him everywhere.

The fortunes of the CIA and the AFL-CIO have also been going downward in Latin America. The agents of Meany and the trainees of AIFLD are being eliminated in many areas. Symbolic of the trend is the big change in Peru, Chile and Bolivia, which were a major concentration for AIFLD and its agents. AIFLD boasted of more extension classes and more expenditures in Peru than in other countries. But it is in these lands that governments stooging for U.S. imperialism were ousted. The properties of American corporations, mainly W. R. Grace & Co., in Peru, were expropriated. Similar changes are taking place in Bolivia. From what is taking place in these countries there is some ground to suspect that a good number of those who offer themselves as students at Front Royal for the three-month courses plus pay for subsequent "internship" and subsistence to their families for the period, do so more for material benefits than a desire to acquire the secrets of American style union leadership. The African and Asian projects appear to be even less promising.

History Marches On

By an ironic twist of history it was the UAW that sparked the exposure of the AFL-CIO's involvement with the CIA. As already noted, in the early stages of the cold war, the UAW's leaders were far out in front in support of that policy and its implementation within the trade unions. But as times changed it became increasingly more difficult for a union like the UAW, with its militant background, to live with such policy and be effective for its members. On May 22, 1966, in a press interview while his union was in convention in Long Beach, Cal., Victor Reuther charged that the AFL-CIO's international affairs department headed by Lovestone was "involved" with the CIA. He charged further that some of the affiliates of the AFL-CIO "have permitted themselves to be used by the CIA as a cover for clandestine operations abroad." And he added, "The tragedy of the AFL-CIO activities in foreign affairs is that they are a vest-pocket operation of Jay Lovestone."

Victor Reuther, brother of the late Walter Reuther, headed the UAW's international department. In 1966 came the exposures that rocked the multi-billion dollar intelligence and "invisible government" system of the U.S. government. Significantly, it was this clash over foreign policy that brought the conflict between the Meany and Reuther group into the open and led to the eventual exit of the UAW from AFL-CIO ranks.

Some weeks after Victor Reuther tossed his bombshell, the UAW took sharp issue with Meany for the walkout of the AFL-CIO's representatives at the Geneva conference of the International Labor Organization (ILO), a United Nations subdivision, because a representative of socialist Poland had been elected chairman of the sessions. Basically at issue was really the long standing AFL-CIO ban on any relations with representatives of socialist lands on any labor matters. Some days later the conflict extended to a sharp protest by the UAW to the State Department because visas were denied a delegation of Soviet trade unionists invited by the UAW and this denial came on intercession of Meany and Lovestone.

One may wonder whether the AFL-CIO leaders have learned anything since 1966. The August, 1970, session of the AFL-CIO executive council addressed a long letter to the ILO hinting that the AFL-CIO might leave that body because it placed a "false stamp of legitimacy" on the unions of the USSR and other socialist countries by their active participation in the work and leadership of the ILO. What disturbs the Meany group most is that a large number of the unions of the ICFTU have participated in the co-operative relationships of the unions of capitalist, socialist and developing lands that currently prevails in the ILO. Having left

the ICFTU because that body was unable to enforce a ban on relations with communist-led unions, the AFL-CIO moved for the next logical step. From the days of postwar reconstitution of the ILO as a UN body, the AFL and later the AFL-CIO leaders opposed membership in it of socialist land unions. For a period the American representatives commanded enough voting power to control its labor section. In time, however, the entry of the socialist lands' unions and many unions of the developing lands and the trend away from rabid anti-Communism in some of European unions of the ICFTU changed the situation in the UN body. The effort of the Meany-Lovestone group to turn the ILO into an organization of only unions that passed their test was dealt a fatal blow in 1960 with publication by the ILO of two books, reports of its special commissions that studied the unions of the USSR and the U.S. ("The Trade Union Situation in the USSR" and "The Trade Union Situation in the United States", both published in Geneva.) To the consternation of the Meany-Lovestone group, it was the report on the Soviet trade unions that was far more favorable and positive than the report on the U.S. unions. The commission noted racketeering and racism and lack of democracy in much of the latter. But as the 1970 letter to the ILO indicated, the AFL-CIO bureaucracy never gives up.

Several days later, the AFL-CIO lobby in Washington, moving fast, pressured a Senate sub-committee to cut off the \$10 million due from the U.S. for the ILO for the last half of 1970. On Aug. 24, the Senate voted 49 to 22 to deny the funds. The ostensible reason given by the AFL-CIO's leaders is that the ILO's new director, Wilfred Jenks of Britain, had named a Soviet representative as one of the five assistant directors of the UN body. (*N.Y. Times*, Aug. 19 and 24, 1970)

The ICFTU was formed in 1949 of splitoffs from the World Federation of Trade Unions. The split was mainly instigated by the American labor leaders in accord with their part in the cold war, after some of the preparatory operations with CIA funds, as is so frankly described by Thomas Braden. For the record it should also be noted that in the period covered by Braden's confessions (1950-54) the CIO leaders too were on the coldwar bandwagon. Braden wrote that on Victor Reuther's request, "I went to Detroit one morning and gave Walter \$50,000 in \$50 bills." He complained that "Victor spent the money, mostly in West Germany, to bolster labor unions there." Those West Germany unions "were already anti-Communist," wrote Braden, and added, "The CIA money Victor spent would have done much more good where unions were tying up ports at the order of Communist leaders." When Braden's article appeared, Victor Reuther said it was the only

instance in which his union had relations with the CIA and he considered it a mistake.

I recall these shameful facts to give some idea to many who were born since those days of the change that has taken place in many quarters and the lack of change in men like those surrounding Meany.

The WFTU, formed under pressure of the wartime anti-fascist alliance of labor unions, was for the first time in labor history an all-inclusive international labor organization that was well on the way to embracing all the world's trade unions for a policy of making labor's influence felt for peace and progress. But, as detailed in "CIA and American Labor," the WFTU was the very opposite of the "American Century" perspective of American imperialism. Washington, the CIA and its agents in the labor leadership wanted an organization that would provide labor conduits into every country marked for penetration and overthrow of unfriendly governments. That's why, as Braden disclosed, millions of dollars were dispensed by the CIA to the Lovestone-run apparatus for financing the wrecking of unions and bribing of labor leaders abroad, and eventually for the formation of the ICFTU.

A whole generation has passed since the ICFTU's formation. The changes are so profound that those who sit in the ICFTU's general office in Brussels are not able to hold unions in line for the rabid anti-Communism of the ICFTU's founding days. The Meany group withdrew from its ranks because they could no longer use the ICFTU as a channel for CIA-type operations. At this writing, almost two years since AFL-CIO withdrawal from the ICFTU, there is still no visible evidence of an agreement to return to the fold. The technical excuse for the withdrawal was the reported sympathetic consideration certain officials of the ICFTU gave to a UAW application for affiliation after that union left the AFL-CIO. After a year of dickering, the ICFTU leaders had yielded to Meany (they needed the AFL-CIO's dues). But Meany then disclosed that the real issue was not the UAW application but the failure of the ICFTU to discipline its many affiliates that had been exchanging visits with the unions of socialist countries and had entered into fraternal relations with them as with Left-led unions of capitalist lands. He demanded such enforcement as a condition for AFL-CIO return. But that is a condition the ICFTU cannot meet because the affiliates assert their autonomous rights. In many capitalist countries, notably France, Italy, Chile and Japan, unions of the ICFTU, WFTU and the Confederation of World Labor cooperated in strikes and other common struggles.

The trend toward greater unity in the world labor movement

progressed as the world-wide antagonism developed to the U.S. policy and its crimes shared by the leaders of unions. Not one union in the world endorsed the U.S. policy in Vietnam outside the AFL-CIO's leaders and the Saigon and Taiwan "unions." Meany's persistent cries that the ICFTU must go back to its original major policy of "anti-Communism," are simply falling on deaf ears. Most unions abroad have become more independent, being no longer in need of AFL-CIO and CIA handouts, as in early post-war days. Unions have turned to many serious problems. No small factor was the fact that certain of the right-led unions in Europe are also close to their own governments and cooperate for a policy of keeping out the AFL-CIO and the CIA from former colonies where the U.S. seeks a neo-colonial penetration. (See chapter on Africa in "CIA and American Labor") This is why the U.S. is dishing out about \$10 million annually for the AFL-CIO's "private international."

The policy of the AFL-CIO leadership alienating the U.S. unions from the world's labor movement is harmful in another sense. It is the U.S. unions that are today most in need of good relations with unions abroad. Many U.S. unions facing international corporations are beset by the problem of imports that knock out many jobs, in large measure from U.S. owned or partly owned plants abroad.

The urgency of an anti-monopoly front of workers across borders is greater today than it has ever been. The UAW has been working for some years to build such a world-wide united front in the automotive field. But its success is limited because to be effective such a movement must be on a much broader scale. The growing urgency may eventually bring the WFTU, ICFTU and other international labor bodies to some form of cooperation. But such cooperation is anathema to George Meany's circle because it contradicts his program of "anti-Communism." Most disturbing to his group have been recent policy statements of the USSR's trade unions and the WFTU's congress in October, 1969, welcoming the developing trend in many unions of all affiliations, towards international unity for labor action. Even the executive body of the ICFTU has been forced to reverse its ban on the right of affiliates to collaborate with WFTU unions.

Fundamental in the turn of events in the world labor movement has been the evaporation of the "American Century" dream upon which the leaders of U.S. labor built their perspective. Instead of the promised benefits of "world leadership," America today has a "sick society" as shown in every phase of its life—rotting cities, racism showing its ugly features more than ever, education deteriorating, skyrocketing crime, fast spreading narcotic addiction,

more restriction on unions, and inflation eating away at the wage dollar, and no let-up in a 15-year unpopular war the U.S. is losing. State governments and municipalities are in crisis because all their tax sources are drained by federal taxes to finance the losing and spreading Indochina war. But it is a Golden Age for the corporations and war profiteers. Monopoly capitalism is marked by still bigger concentrations of capital—conglomerates.

This is hardly the "American Century" that the ideologists of the cold war and their labor lieutenants painted in the forties. And this was the dream for which an hysterical drive was launched against the left and CIO unions when a million members were expelled and workers were screened out of their jobs and "red-listed," witch-hunts spread through the country and Communists were tried and jailed. The drive was on to stifle criticism of the "dream," especially against the Communists who warned against illusions that some workers would have an "aristocratic" status in the "new order" as in the hey-days of British imperialism, and share some of the crumbs of super-profits from super-exploitation.

A decade ago, in my book *American Labor: Which Way?* (New Century Publishers, New York, 1961) I wrote:

"As in Western Europe at a certain stage of their imperialism, a minority among the workers benefited temporarily from some crumbs off the tables laden with super-profits. But for the mass of workers, the progress that was made came only after hard and militant struggle.

"Although more than a decade has passed since the CIO's expulsion and its leaders tied the future of the unions to the cold war, the labor movement has not yet seriously examined the consequences of that policy. It is time to frankly put the question, 'Was it worth the price?' and look the facts squarely in the face. We have documented the facts in these chapters. But the really big question today is not only whether the course followed since the war served the interests of the workers, but how is labor facing up to the *new changes* taking place with extraordinary speed before our eyes." (p. 16)

And further:

"When the AFL-CIO leaders tied labor's future to the star of 'free world leadership' they took the workers on a path that inevitably led downward, just as happened in the empires now in crisis. There is no future of progress for the labor movement if more and more of the country's resources go abroad for militarization of a global empire, to arm reactionary allies and to protect American invest-

ments from seizure and nationalization by peoples rising for freedom. Moreover, a growing number in labor are recognizing, as our analysis shows, that the labor movement lost much of its fighting and crusading spirit when its leaders tied the unions to the 'American Century' chariot." (p. 18)

The decade since then has confirmed this warning. Disillusionment with the bankrupt policy and perspective of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy is now on a mass scale. It is even assuming forms of rebellion against the old line leadership. Underscoring that fact was the Louis Harris poll published some days after the February, 1971, AFL-CIO executive council meeting (*N.Y. Post*, March 4, 1971) revealing the wide gap between the rank and file and the leaders. The council had just announced its endorsement of the Laos invasion. But the poll found that union members were 64 to 27 for withdrawal by the end of 1971.

In the foregoing pages we have reviewed the record of the AFL-CIO's dominant group. We examined it against the claims of its head, George Meany, and a book by Joseph Beirne defending its policies. It is a record of bankruptcy. The issue is not whether the AFL-CIO and its millions of members are a force for progress. The American labor movement is a gigantic force that by its very existence is a force for progress. Its leaders can slow the march of labor, detour it for periods, confuse much of it, and, most of all, get in the way of those periodic initiatives and leadership that speed the pace of the march and the achievement of new historic gains. *But they can't put the labor movement into a cage.*

CHAPTER XI

ALLIANCE FOR LABOR ACTION

The formation of the Alliance for Labor Action at a meeting of leaders of the UAW and the Teamsters in Chicago July 23, 1968, was viewed by many as the strongest challenge to the leadership of the AFL-CIO since the upsurge of the thirties brought the Congress of Industrial Organizations into existence.

The agreed upon program of the ALA was restated and spelled out to some extent at a convention of 500 delegates from the two founding unions held in Washington May 26-27, 1969. The ALA and its program represent a significant departure from the conservatism and stagnation that rules the AFL-CIO.

In about a year since the ALA began functioning, two more unions joined. They were the Chemical Workers Union and the newly-formed National Council of Distributive Workers of which the parent unit is New York's District 65. At this writing the ALA unions total four million members—nearly a fourth of the total membership in the United States. But the ALA's founders stressed emphatically that they did not form a new federation of labor to rival the AFL-CIO. They declare the object is to "revitalize" the trade union movement as a whole. They invite unions in or out of the AFL-CIO to cooperate in undertakings to strengthen the union movement and advance the interests of the workers on all fronts.

The ALA's statement of purposes said in part:

"This is a time for change and challenge. The 20th Century technological revolution confronts the American people with new and complex problems and new exciting opportunities. To meet the problems and to realize the promise that tomorrow holds, America must reorder its national priorities. It must put first things first. . . .

"Tomorrow's problems will not be solved with yesterday's ideas, yesterday's tools and concepts. We must act with new ideas, new concepts, new social innovations. We must create new forms of cooperation, new instruments and institutions for economic and social action."

The labor movement is "at a crossroads" on the role it is to

play "in this time of crisis," declares the statement, and sets the following guidelines:

"It must subject itself to honest self-searching and self-evaluation.

"It must free itself from complacency and self-congratulations.

"It must acquire a sense of renewal and rededication to social progress.

"It must free itself of old attitudes and habits and demonstrate the willingness, the capability and commitment to make fundamental changes in its policies that respond to the realities of a swiftly changing world."

With like eloquence, the statement of purposes pictured an America in crisis and the "agenda of unfinished business," to which the unions must give attention. Organizing of the three-fourths of the workers still not in unions is set as the No. 1 objective. Strong emphasis is put on organizing the "working poor" and especially the farm workers.

"Those unions with energy, skill and resources are obliged to join forces and commit adequate resources needed to help other cooperating organizations in mobilizing and mounting massive organizing campaigns," says the statement.

The ALA statement sets forth its tasks under five headings and invites "any organization prepared to join in this common, constructive effort." They are: to organize the unorganized "millions"; to modernize collective bargaining and make it more effective against the corporate giants and conglomerates and develop cooperation of affected unions in common struggle; to explore the possibility of establishing an "emergency defense fund" big enough to back any section of the workers involved in a key struggle; to mobilize maximum efforts to help the agricultural workers obtain collective bargaining rights; and to help organize "community unions" of the working poor, which means mostly of the black and brown people, and encourage their "self-organization and self-determination."

Another set of objectives is listed in 13 points under the heading, "social and community action," as the ALA calls its political, legislative and related community activities. That list includes goals that are today usually covered in resolutions of the AFL-CIO—national health insurance for all, urban rehabilitation, educational improvement and expansion, action against pollution, advances in aid for senior citizens, eradication of racism, measures against poverty, expanded low-cost housing construction, etc. The comprehensive resolutions adopted on each of those topics at the 1969

ALA convention did not differ much in content from those of the AFL-CIO and its unions. The basic question is how to make the struggle for them effective.

The most important advance at the ALA convention over the original statement of purposes announced in 1968 was a statement outlining the organization's position for peace and an end of the Vietnam war, and its opposition to the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) program that was then before Congress. The general approach of that statement was that social-economic progress is impossible without peace and a shift of priorities from military expenditures to the needs of the people. This was also the central theme of the keynote speeches of Walter Reuther of the UAW and Frank Fitzsimmons of the Teamsters at the convention.

What is publicly stated as to the political action outlook of the ALA contains little more than a policy of independence simply in the sense of non-partisanship in support of candidates of existing parties who may respond to the objectives of the labor movement. There is no expressed or implied interest in a new people's or labor party.

One section that implies criticism of the AFL-CIO leadership sets the aim to "develop policies and carry out programs that will enable the American labor movement to repair the alienation of the liberal-intellectual and academic community and the youth of our nation in order to build and strengthen a new alliance of progressive forces in the broad effort to advance the common good." The potential importance of this objective can hardly be overestimated. As already noted, the first move in that direction has been made.

Another point under the heading of ALA social and community action reflects more the reactionary side of the much-criticized AFL-CIO. It states a vaguely-worded objective to cooperate with labor organizations in the "free world" to "strengthen freedom and democracy and in resisting all forms of totalitarianism and dictatorship, whether communist, fascist or military in character." This is a formulation that is much like the position held by leaders of both of the founding unions of the ALA during the early coldwar days, with its slanderous lumping of communism with fascism.

One of the heritages of the Joe McCarthy era that still influence men like Fitzsimmons and the late Walter Reuther who had backed the cold war is that they seem to take it for granted that every time they say or do something in a progressive direction they must in some form swear they aren't for "communism." The effect of such a position at this late stage when millions are finding that "anti-communism" as a policy is so costly in dollars and lives,

is to cast doubt on the ALA's progressivism among many people.

The issue is not whether the leaders of the ALA are for or against communism. In view of their record, no one would suspect they are. But to indulge in the barefaced falsehood of lumping communism with fascism contradicts the very policy they have begun to practice. The fact is that the UAW since 1966 until Reuther's tragic death in 1970 has found it necessary to reverse course, as in the development of fraternal relations with the Soviet trade unions, challenging the AFL-CIO's policy of anti-communism in the ICFTU and in the ILO and exposing the federation's involvement with the CIA. The ALA inserted large ads in newspapers across the country associating itself with the Moratorium peace demonstrations of the fall of 1969 in which the Communists, too, were an active and leading participant.

Are the ALA leaders aware of any fascists supporting peace? The assorted ultra-rightists and open fascists are the worst hawks. The ALA leaders cannot point to a single instance in history when Communists, or others of the constructive left, broke strikes or unions or did anything that harms the working class. But they do know that the ultra-rightists and fascists are the most active union-busting troops for reaction. The ALA leaders are also well aware that it is the Communists and others on the left who have since the forties been warning of the disastrous consequences of tying the labor movement to the coldwar policy—a policy from which the ALA has begun to depart. Privately you get from some apologists for the ALA the contradictory position that the provision in the statement of purposes (Sec. M) was needed to preclude redbaiting by the AFL-CIO leaders and its organizers as had been done against the CIO in its early stages. But this only shows how far behind the times are the ALA leaders. The weapon of redbaiting is far from the effectiveness it had a quarter century ago, and it is its user who today risks the much greater loss in the eyes of the people.

Notwithstanding the above criticisms and certain vagueness in the ALA statement of purposes, the ALA's stated position is basically a challenge to the position of the AFL-CIO's bureaucracy. Along with some of the subsequent steps of the ALA, the declaration of purposes expresses a potential progressive movement. Potential, because in the first two years since its announced formation, the ALA has been slow in getting into action, as though there is hesitancy to go through with the program.

Slow on Action

There were disputes over policy within the AFL-CIO since the 1955 merger. So sharp were those disputes that on April 13, 1961,

Reuther called a meeting of the former CIO unions to consider a defense strategy against the Meany group and the craft organizations.

There was also a running dispute with the AFL-CIO's dominant group over international issues, with Reuther's occasional digression from the AFL-CIO policy. Other differences that cropped up were over the federation's racist policies. One such occasion was when Meany blocked executive council endorsement of the historic 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington.

By 1966, when the Reuther group moved more rapidly away from the AFL-CIO international policies, even charging CIA involvement, most of Reuther's associates in the executive council, heads of former CIO unions, were firmly integrated into the Meany apparatus and were hardly distinguishable from the old AFL leaders. Since much of the old craft vs. industrial unionism issue had faded, and in terms of foreign affairs there was little difference, there wasn't much of a dispute between most of the former CIO leaders and the Meany group.

Reuther's group, however, advanced the view that not only the old AFL but also the CIO position had become obsolete in face of the changes in the U.S. and the world. The UAW began to develop its position independently. On January 28, 1966, the UAW addressed a letter to its members that said that the AFL-CIO:

“... suffers from a sense of complacency and adherence to the status quo and is not fulfilling the basic aims and purposes which prompted the merger of the AFL and CIO. The AFL-CIO lacks the social vision, the dynamic thrust, the crusading spirit that should characterize the progressive, modern labor movement which it can and must be if it is to be equal to the new challenge and the new opportunities of our 20th century technological society.”

A series of subsequent letters spelled out some elements of a new program that were eventually incorporated in general terms in the ALA document of purposes. Among the proposals was a “massive organizing” drive to double the AFL-CIO membership in six years and a planned expenditure annually of \$14.5 million to achieve that goal. The UAW called on the AFL-CIO leaders to go “beyond the phrases of pious platitudes” and act with “greater courage” for equal rights and opportunities, and do so not only at community levels but, “of major importance, within the labor movement itself.” On July 1, 1968, the UAW withdrew from the AFL-CIO, announcing its dues would be held in escrow pending action on its proposals. But the AFL-CIO council suspended the big union. Three weeks later the decision for formation of the

ALA was announced by the leaders of the UAW and the Teamsters.

The differences that brought the split between the AFL-CIO and the Teamsters came along a different course. After the 1955 AFL-CIO merger was consummated and there was much talk in the air of a possible organizing drive, the anti-union forces also mapped their strategy to block or take the steam out of such a drive. As in the similar strategy against the CIO when it was militant, when the House Un-American Activities Committee was used to make "communism" the splitting issue, the union-busters of the fifties trotted out a little known Senate sub-committee headed by Senator John L. McClellan to "investigate" corruption and violence in unions. A vulnerable target was the International Brotherhood of Teamsters because it had a long history of considerable corruption and gangster influence in some locals and its president, Dave Beck, was considerably less than clean. But the major reason for picking the IBT as the target was because it was then, as it is today, the largest union in the key transportation field, and its power ran across all industries. The calculations were that if this union's back was broken, the labor movement's back would be severely strained. Moreover, the plan was to saturate the airwaves and press with exposures of union corruption to weaken trade union attraction among the unorganized and to lay the ground for new anti-union legislation.

That plan was carried out with considerable effectiveness. Some very ugly features of certain locals were well publicized. The ugliest was the performance of the very reactionary Beck on the witness stand and the exposure of his corrupt activities some of which eventually landed him in prison. The hearings brought out how Beck worked hand-in-hand with the labor relations firm of the employers at the expense of his members. The discredited Beck was displaced by James Hoffa at an IBT convention and the McClellan Committee guns were shifted against Hoffa. It was Hoffa who built up a powerful mid-western conference of IBT locals with 400,000 members to become the unifier and powerful pattern-setter in the industry in negotiations. Until Hoffa came on the scene, the IBT's locals were each on their own and easy marks for the employers. The union's traditional unrestricted autonomy for locals also made many of them easy prey for racketeers. Not of the Milquetoast type, Hoffa had employed strong measures against some groups in the IBT to bring the locals in line for the joint conference-level negotiations. Eventually the union was made up of four conferences—midwest, eastern, western and southern. The IBT's negotiating power became far more effective and contributed strongly to driving up the union's membership to a reported 2,100,000 at this writing.

The McClellan Committee's hearings were directed toward picturing Hoffa as the symbol of union corruption although nothing has so much contributed to eliminating corruption than the system Hoffa instituted. Much was made of some business enterprises Hoffa was involved in personally on the ground that he took advantage of his union position. But Hoffa really followed the ethics of capitalist business, although hardly ethical in a democratic union sense. He was not charged with stealing anything from the members. In four trials he was acquitted. The conviction that put him in jail was on the charge of tampering with a jury, based entirely on the testimony of a man who cooperated with the FBI as an undercover agent, who had several cases pending against him, including murder, and who has not yet been tried on any of them.

Edward Partin, the key FBI plant whose testimony was the sole basis for Hoffa's conviction in 1964, recanted his testimony in an affidavit that gave a detailed description of the way Justice Department agents forced him to give the false testimony in exchange for lifting a charge of kidnapping and possible execution on which he was then held. At this writing the affidavit was still before the court. But Hoffa, still in prison, was forced to relinquish his candidacy for reelection and all relation to the IBT to qualify for parole.

The union-busters did well on their score card. They threw the AFL-CIO into confusion with a debate over "ethics," and eventually into a split that culminated in the 1957 convention in Atlantic City with the expulsion of the IBT. The Meany and Reuther forces were united on that. They thought that by throwing the IBT to the wolves the pending legislation against unions would be shelved. It wasn't. The Landrum-Griffin Law, ostensibly aiming at union corruption, basically outlawed the weapon of union solidarity by a ban on the secondary boycott. A union could not refuse to handle scab-produced products. The AFL-CIO, weakened by loss of one of its key unions, did not even pretend to be interested in an organizing drive.

The document on ethics in unions adopted by the AFL-CIO in its effort to please the McClellan Committee and the "public" was a sham. It has been collecting dust since the IBT's expulsion, although some of Meany's closest associates, notably those in the building trades, are less than ethical by any standards. There are quite a number of Aegean stables that need to be cleaned out in the AFL-CIO and outside it, notably in the United Mine Workers. But the anti-union employers thrust the issue into labor ranks to split and confuse it, to kill union effectiveness in organizing and to get more anti-union legislation. Hoffa is really a political prisoner. But those who thought that when Hoffa was

jailed the IBT would fall apart were mistaken. The IBT has continued to set the pace in growth. It is now the largest union in the capitalist world.

That the UAW and the IBT it voted to expel in 1957 should now get together is one of the ironic twists in labor history. As on other issues, the hard pressure of the class struggle broke through there, too. The same pressures also caused the ALA to take a friendly approach toward the unions that were expelled from the CIO in 1949 during the anti-communist phobia. These unions were invited to come in. What are some of the developments that made necessary the new approach?

1. The AFL-CIO has become stagnant. Leaders of its major affiliates have become satisfied with the strength and job control they already command in their respective fields. They look too little beyond the routine administration of the unions as they are and have little interest in investing funds and manpower for the organization of other workers. *The concept that strong unions have the obligation to help organize the poor and unorganized, such as had built the early CIO, needs to be revitalized.*

2. The new concentrations of capital, especially the conglomerate combines that swallow many giant corporations without regard for the industries they cover, make necessary forms of organizing and collective bargaining that go far beyond the existing craft and industrial union scope. *It takes the cooperation of several industrial unions and craft unions that may be involved to effectively face a conglomerate.*

The Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO, when under Reuther's presidency, initiated "coordinated" or "coalition" bargaining in several fields notably in the copper negotiations and strike of 1967-68 that brought together 10 unions and in General Electric bargaining.

3. The composition of unions today has in certain respects made the problem of working class solidarity against an employer or in an industry, more complicated. Hardly a union today, whether craft or industrial, adheres to the traditional jurisdiction specified in its charter or implied in its name. Many unions have "catchalls." The United Steelworkers, for example, has 15 divisions, each with its own policy conference, and many sub-divisions within each that cover anything from fishing rods and related equipment to gigantic earth-moving machinery, with the original basic steel division a minority of the membership.

The IBT with its drivers covering every industry, also has hundreds of thousands of inside workers in various fields of manufacturing and processing.

The story is the same for the UAW, Carpenters, International

Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the two unions in the chemical field, to name just a few. The Laborers Union with a half million members, once limited to hod carriers and common labor work in construction, today covers workers in many fields not even remotely related to construction, including even white collar workers and technicians.

It is today utterly useless and in a practical sense impossible to order a union to transfer workers it has under contract to another union because of what was said in a charter issued a half century ago or further back. Today even some of the building trades unions have agreed to sign contracts with firms engaged in factory-like production of prefabricated quick-assembly or mobile homes, covering any and all occupations that may be involved. *The problem of unifying the workers of an employer or an industry faces the unions in a new way.*

The plants of a chain corporation may be divided among several or many unions—some of them strong unions—that must agree on demands, conduct of joint negotiations and possibly of a joint strike, settlement terms, enforcement of contract terms between expirations and many similar problems. It takes an effective and authoritative leadership of a labor federation, responsive to the new problems, to make such united action possible. In the best example of such united action, in the GE strike, the decisive force of the solid unity in that struggle did not come from the AFL-CIO's Coordinating Bargaining Committee but from the parallel unity of the AFL-CIO's International Union of Electrical Workers and the independent (expelled from the CIO) United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE). The latter union had been kept out of the CBC by Meany. The tremendous weight and significance of the GE struggle and the wide movement in its support led Meany to recognize the UE's part in the struggle and to allot to its strikers 10 per cent of the strike aid funds collected through the AFL-CIO. The UAW and Teamsters were, however, admitted into the CBC, over Meany's opposition.

4. The "military industrial complex" that today dominates relations in the country's economy has put more power than ever in the hands of the 100 largest corporations and banks. It is these forces that have in recent years developed a more effective coordination of their efforts to undermine unions. Their course of action dispels the long-held illusions that unions and collective bargaining are secure and that legal precedents favorable to unions are frozen into law. Recent developments, especially since Nixon's election, show that unions face attacks along some newer lines as well as along old lines. President Nixon's move for compulsory arbitration in transport industries and eventually in all key fields; the

effort to deprive rank and file members of the right to pass on a contract before it takes force, the changes in the Supreme Court and NLRB; the move to freeze wages begun with the building trades are all *steps towards new restrictions on unions*.

5. Experience of more than a century proves clearly the error of assuming that the workers could be fully organized if only each union "does its thing." The fact that at this late stage of industrial development less than a fourth of the U.S. workforce is in unions is proof that *other approaches are needed than simple reliance on each union to take care of its field*. The virtual standstill in significant organizing for about 20 years has had the effect of deepening a division between the organized and unorganized. The dividing gap is even deepened by the fact that the organized section of the workers is for the most part controlled by the strongest unions, mostly based on the higher paid and best protected workers. This situation over many years has left untouched much of the "institutionalized" poverty in the United States and its concentration in ghettos in urban centers and in hamlets of very hungry poor people, mostly in the South and through the vast stretches known as Appalachia.

Technological changes have tossed more and more workers on the scrap heap. The unions simply wipe these workers off their books and confine attention to those still working and paying dues. The leaders of the United Mine Workers, for example, consider it a great "victory" if they get a raise for miners in exchange for barring any restrictions on new machinery. But an industry that once employed more than 800,000 now gives work to fewer than 150,000 many thousands of whom are non-union. The displaced populate the hunger towns of Appalachia.

The most revealing of the hunger surveys was the report of the Citizens Board of Inquiry, consisting of prominent persons in social, welfare and academic and labor fields, that was initiated by the UAW. Their report "Hunger USA" (New Community Press, Washington, D.C.) issued in 1968 showed that millions of poor Americans suffer from malnutrition, many to the point of permanent impairment of health. The report, filling a book and citing numerous cases in many areas, said:

"If you go look, you'll find America a shocking place. No other western country permits such a large proportion of its people to endure the lives we press on our poor. To make four-fifths of a nation more affluent than any people in history we have degraded one fifth mercilessly."

Those millions of permanently hungering people are part of the working class, even if they have for years been denied an oppor-

tunity to work, or just get occasional jobs to supplement the extremely low relief in the affected areas. They, too, must be organized for a type of action that responds to their immediate needs, for adequate welfare, for jobs, for equality in all fields of public services, for job retraining. *To meet that problem, the ALA set among its objectives the organization of "community unions" of black, brown, Indian, white poor, much as was done with the grape workers of Delano, Calif.*

6. As already noted earlier, political action through the unions has made slow progress, though the trend towards political independence among American voters shows a declining confidence by a growing number in the two old parties. The policies of the AFL-CIO on the war and black liberation have alienated many from the federation and its politics. A new political movement is urgent, through which labor, black, Chicano and other sectors of the population can express themselves. To the above should be added the fact that the composition of the labor force has changed and is changing, with white collar, youth and women workers exercising a greater influence. These newer entrants into the labor force are not easily fitted into the mechanics of traditional labor politics—of just voting for "labor endorsed" candidates.

The ALA does not advocate a new party, but its criticism of AFL-CIO ineffectiveness reflects its belief that political action can be much more effective with greater vigor and more popular appeal even within the framework of the present two-party limits.

7. Trade union democracy and a greater involvement of the rank and file in a union's affairs did not figure in the dispute with the AFL-CIO that brought the ALA into existence. Neither of the two founding unions of the ALA has indicated concern over the fact that the rate of participation by the membership of unions is today the lowest it has ever been. *Unless unions are more democratic and a greater rate of participation is achieved, especially at shop level activity, there will be no higher rate of participation in organizing, political, community or any other activity.*

The above conditions that call for drastic changes in trade union programs and work do not exhaust the list, but they do indicate the buildup of pressure that led to the disputes with the AFL-CIO and eventually to the formation of the ALA. Yet at this writing, almost three years since the ALA was conceived and nearly two years since its formal constitution, what has it done?

The ALA is engaged in an organizing drive in Atlanta aimed at some 50,000 unorganized workers, mostly black. Some success has been achieved but after nearly a year results have been hardly spectacular.

Community organizations have been set up or supported in

Watts, Los Angeles; the Tandy section of St. Louis, and in several other areas.

Through large ads, the ALA associated itself with the 1969 movement for the immediate end of the war in Vietnam.

An effective petition drive for tax liberalization was carried out, and the ALA is pressing vigorously for a national health insurance bill. A director of community, church and campus relations was named. The ALA also began a drive for voting registration of youths above 18.

One of the first moves of the ALA was to address a letter to the AFL-CIO (Nov. 24, 1968) proposing a "Universal No-Raiding Agreement" so all unions would be secure from raids by other unions and could unite for common action against attacks expected from the newly-installed Nixon administration. The AFL-CIO leaders didn't even respond. At its 1969 convention the AFL-CIO expelled the Chemical Union of 100,000 members for announcing it would work with the ALA.

At this writing, three years after the 1968 announcement of the formation of the ALA, there seems to be much disappointment among those in the labor movement who hoped for more substantial evidence of its ability to bring vitality into the trade unions. Unions that were expected to join in its effort have been holding off. The slowness to get moving has caused loss of hope in the ALA. The Chemical Workers returned to the AFL-CIO fold.

One unfortunate aspect is that the ALA did not come as a result of a conscious rank and file movement. It came as a surprise announcement by the heads of the two unions. There was no followup with an active campaign to implement it and no discussion at the local level in the two unions. The convention in 1969 that formally constituted the ALA and its machinery, was not of elected delegates but of 250 appointed representatives from each of the two unions.

The inauguration of the ALA from the top doesn't mean that the objectives set are bad. But the lack of effort to bring the program and planned activities down to the four million members in the locals suggests that possibly the leaders of the two unions either were not fully agreed on what to do or were too hesitant. Preoccupation of the heads of both unions with the difficult and prolonged 1970 negotiations and preparation for them; the eventual GM strike and Walter Reuther's death in a plane accident may explain in part the slowness of the ALA to get on with its program. But the absence of an aroused membership to pursue the ALA initiative seems to be the more basic explanation. And this, in turn, may stem from differences in background of the ALA leaders.

The UAW came up in the militant CIO upsurge and became

a mass union in the historic General Motors sit-down of 1937. That victory really triggered the CIO's big drive. To this day the UAW still retains some of the influence of its formative days.

The IBT, on the other hand, was born in the 19th century as a union of drivers of horse vehicles. It had been under conservative leadership for many decades, and until the fifties it was really a federation of autonomous locals.

The fact that two unions of such different historic backgrounds are brought together for a new initiative is in itself a significant development. It shows that the force of new conditions and changes brings together organizations that in the past seemed most apart.

The ALA has not yet had a real test. It certainly hasn't yet had the present day equivalent of the GM sitdown and the impetus such a struggle could give to a swift advance. The extra caution in the ALA is also a handicap. What made the CIO was the swiftness of its drive in the thirties, its strategy of opening all stops and going ahead full steam wherever there was an opening. The very vigor of the movement gave impetus to an organizing upsurge in places where it wasn't expected.

Explanations offered for the lag in the ALA have some validity. The situation today differs in a number of respects from the situation in the thirties. The movement of the thirties was propelled by the fury of millions of hunger victims in the deep depression. Antipathy to the narrowness and inaction of the craft-dominated AFL was widespread. Hundreds of thousands who had been activists in the unemployed movement were ready and willing volunteers for organizing work. Many helped organize plants for little more than meals and transportation fare. Today volunteer organizers are rare. Many of the younger people today, who know about the thirties only from what they have read, are likely to exaggerate the Roosevelt influence in the success of the organizing of the thirties, as if the work of the thousands who worked night and day, often in face of attacks by company goons, and who even lost their lives, didn't count much. The popular pressure that forced some of the New Deal reforms was a help, of course. But the exaggeration of the New Deal's contribution often heard as an excuse for inaction today, leaves the implication that not much can be done until another Roosevelt turns up in the White House.

Unfortunately many present-day officials compare the two periods in a shortsighted way. As already noted, much of the vitality that spurred the upsurge of the thirties came from the general progressive rise of that time: the movement of the unemployed and its high percentage of blacks; the movement against war and fascism; the youth rebellion of that period; the radicalization of the intellectual community and the already substantial left-

led rank and file and progressive-led union movement of that day. These movements produced tens of thousands of left activists under Communist and left-socialist leadership.

John L. Lewis and the group around him that initiated the CIO were hardly radicals. They were known for many years for their right wing policies, rabid anti-Communism and expulsion of entire left-led unions. Nevertheless, Lewis and his associates were keen enough to recognize that if they were to succeed in their new effort they would have to tap the vitality of the progressive streams of that time. Here is how Saul Alinsky, Lewis' biographer, explained their approach:

"When Lewis turned to help the auto workers, he saw that they were being organized and led by the leftists. The leaders and organizers of the UAW group in General Motors were the left-wingers Wyndham Mortimer and Robert Travis. These two built the union in the General Motors empire. If Lewis wanted to take the auto workers into the CIO he had to take their left-wing leadership.

"Every place where new industrial unions were being formed young and middle aged Communists were working tirelessly. . . . In these receptive circumstances, the Communist Party was welcomed into many quarters. Their issues and actions appealed to countless Americans. . . . Then as is now commonly known, the Communists worked indefatigably, with no job being too menial or unimportant. They literally poured themselves completely into their assignments. The Communist Party gave its complete support to the CIO.

"The CIO was waging economic war, and as do all organizations and nations in time of war, it welcomed allies wherever they could be found. The fact is that the Communist Party made a major contribution in the organization of the unorganized for the CIO." (*John L. Lewis*, by Saul Alinsky, p. 153.)

Similar testimony will be found in Sidney Fine's book, "Sit-Down," (Michigan University Press) and other serious historic works on labor.

What is the comparative situation today? The country is again in a crisis, although it is a crisis of a different type. Various mass movements are under way. Their influence and the activity of thousands of activists are also a tremendous potential force for revitalizing the labor movement. It should not be forgotten that a large percentage of the activists who contributed to the vitality of the thirties didn't start with paid-up union books.

Some present day examples illustrate what happened in the thirties on a much greater scale.

It is well known that the aid of many hundreds of persons throughout the country not in the Farm Workers Organizing Committee or in any unions contributed to the key victory of the California grape workers after a five-year struggle. This, of course, is not to underestimate the primary force of the struggle, the grape workers themselves.

Nor was the long struggle of the Charleston, N.C., black hospital workers in 1969-70 an isolated, local union struggle. It became the rallying point for support from unions and other progressive forces all over the country, with much direct aid on the field of battle from such supporters as the entire black community of that city and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. There, too, the front line soldiers in the struggle were the striking hospital workers themselves.

A review of the sort of people who worked in support of these struggles (as of the GE strikers and many others) will show a heavy representation from the progressive radical movement of today—from the peace movement, the black liberation movement, the youth rebellion, the progressivism among intellectuals, the women's movements and, of course, the rank and file movement that is spreading in the unions.

The key question confronting all who, like the ALA, challenge the conservative establishment in the labor movement, is how to tap all those sources of strength and vigor and channel them into the new movement. The ALA did not profit from such past experiences, at least not until this writing. The latest indication of ALA inaction was an announcement by the UAW and the Teamsters on July 5, 1971, at the Teamsters' convention, that both of the big unions will stop payments into the ALA fund for at least a year.

CHAPTER XII

"NEW LEFTS" AND OLD ULTRA-LEFTISTS

In the foregoing pages we have shown that the impotence of the AFL-CIO leadership in face of the challenging times has spurred a trend of opposition ranging from rank and file movements at the local and shop level up to the leaderships of some unions. The primary moving force has been the growing dissatisfaction among the workers with the way their unions meet their problems. This has caused angry mass outbursts, most often spontaneous, among the workers, in the form of "wildcat" strikes; shop-level activities that bypass the union's regular procedures; a high percentage of rejections of contract terms negotiated and recommended by union officials and a rising number of cases in which members vote long-entrenched leaders out of office.

The escalation of such mass rebellions has also given rise to rank and file movements of a more organized and consciously progressive character in many unions across the country. Also some long-established rank and file movements have gained fresh vitality.

Rank and file movements take many forms. Some are permanent groups that wage a continuous struggle and advance candidates for union office. Some are built on only one issue and may broaden their scope later. There are many black caucuses. Some black caucuses may work in cooperation with other progressive groups. Others may be limited to "black issues" or may even be hostile to whites in the work location. Some groups are limited to a local or shop. Others are knit together in a national network that seeks a change of policy or leadership or both in national unions.

At this writing, it is impossible to give the existing rank and file groups a general characterization in terms of the policies and ideology that guide them. But their common element is their dissatisfaction with the failure of their unions to respond to their needs. They advocate reforms or change in leadership which they believe will improve matters. A widespread characteristic among such groups is their trend leftward. But that isn't necessarily the case in all of the groups.

Only recently, at a conference of rank and file groups from many parts of the country on June 27-28, 1970, in Chicago, attended by 900, was a step taken to coordinate rank and file groups on a

national scale. The aim is greater effectiveness through unity of program and action. We shall deal with that movement in a later chapter.

But all such manifestation of rank and file action is only the top of an iceberg. Most of the seething discontent in unions is not seen publicly because most unions are bureaucratic and tightly controlled. Open display of opposition is often economically risky and in certain unions even physically risky for those who speak up.

Everything that calls itself "rank and file" isn't necessarily a real expression of the rank and file workers. There are a number of groups today, some led by elements discredited many years ago. They try to attract the large masses of the new militants who seek progressive direction. There is much rivalry among these groups. Like circus barkers they shower the large numbers of newcomers to the left with literature and outdo each other with "super-revolutionary" phraseology. But the common characteristic of all these types is that they all insist the rank and file groups in unions must be what they call "revolutionary," and like a chorus they damn what they call the "old left," as they label the Communists.

There are also some new groups or expressions of ideological trends that are generally classed "New Left," mostly outside union ranks, who seek to influence militants in trade unions. Most "New Lefters" too, are hostile to the Communists and indulge in "super-revolutionary" phrasemongering, professing to offer a "substitute" for the "old left" with what they call "socialism." But these views in the pages of "New Left" literature come only from their intellectual spokesmen. There isn't what may be called an organized form or conclusive line of thought in the "New Left" to which a large number of persons are firmly committed. Thus, notwithstanding the anti-Communist attacks that come from the "ideologists" who claim to speak for the "New Left," the Communist Party says in its New Program (pp. 121-122):

"We Communists welcome the new growth of the Left. We welcome its growing challenge to the status quo, to the present social system. This is essential for building the movement for socialism. We fight to increase Left influence in the broad democratic streams of American life. This is needed to give democratic processes more vitality and substance, to speed their renewal. It is needed to test and perfect Left policy and programs in the arena of social conflicts involving millions.

"We strive for unity of the Left in order to realize its full political potential in the community at large. Whatever the differences between ourselves and others on the Left, we

concentrate on seeking areas of agreement where united action can be organized. In common action different views can be discussed most fruitfully, with the greatest hope of reaching agreement."

It is hardly within the scope of these pages to go extensively into the basic views of the assortment of groups that are trying to win new militants in the labor movement with an appeal of both "anti-Communism" and what they allege is "socialism." But we will need to summarize their positions to see how their activity affects trade union affairs. Here I want to make it emphatically clear that in identifying these groups or their views, I am only pointing to the handful of their spokesmen, mostly old "pros," and not the far larger number of newcomers they seek to influence. The fact is, as those familiar with those groups know, they have a terrific turnover. Few stay long in their sects. But they confuse many people who think these groups have "something new."

At least a half dozen of the old groups, renamed or repolished, are rival Trotskyist groups. They are splitoffs and re-splits from the parent Trotskyist organization, the Socialist Workers Party, publisher of the *Militant* and sponsor of the Young Socialist Alliance. They all claim loyalty to Trotskyism and attack each other for violating that line. Among them are the Spartacist League, with the *Spartacist* its paper; the Socialist Committee of Correspondence; the Vanguard Newsletter group; the Workers League, with the *Bulletin* as its paper, and the World Workers Party, with the *Workers World*. Hardly distinguishable from the Trotskyists are the International Socialists, with the *International Socialist* as their publication.

Workers are frequently showered with leaflets in the name of one of these Trotskyist groups, or in the name of some "rank and file" group they allege to represent.

Another category of groups are of the Maoist type. The noisiest among them is the Progressive Labor Party, publisher of the *Challenge*. These groups too are in tense rivalry for the distinction of being most ultra-leftist. One group in New York claims to be the "American Workers Communist Party" and occasionally puts out a paper called "Marxist-Leninist Vanguard" that bristles with "revolutionism" and attacks even Mao for being a revisionist. Another outfit calls itself "Communist Party USA (Marxist-Leninist)" A Chicago group says it is an "ad hoc Committee for a Marxist Leninist Party." The trade union groups of the Black Panther Party also reflect a certain amount of Maoist influence.

Persons in the academic and other professions associated with

the "New Left" (not tied to Trotskyists or Maoists) are often able to get into newspapers and big circulation magazines with their viewpoint. But there are a number of publications that have been the channels for "New Leftism." For a time *Studies on the Left* (now defunct) served that role. The *Monthly Review* is another. The *Guardian* has for some years been a New Left organ after it was taken over by a group of ultra-leftists and some of the original publishers were ousted. A second "take-over" attempt early in 1970 by a group that termed the *Guardian* too tame for their taste was foiled. After the exit of the "super leftists" the paper seemed to be leaning towards its earlier more constructive position.

Closely related to the "New Left" were the assortment of groups of students at some of the campuses and Students for a Democratic Society publications. The SDS, which was viewed as the most viable section of the New Left and its best organized sector, was even beginning in some areas to develop an orientation towards the working class and for work in unions, when a series of splits splintered it between the Trotskyist, Maoist and anarchist influences. At this writing the SDS is defunct. The so-called "Weatherman" faction that controlled the national office of the SDS in Chicago is largely anarchist-oriented and gave a few samples of its policy by organizing a rampage of terror and window-smashing in Chicago and other cities, and some of its members were involved in bombings and other acts of terror across the country. Such policy opens the field wide for planted provocateurs as has already been disclosed in a number of recent trials of its victims. The virtual demise of the SDS brought on by its "Weatherman" group recalls a previous infiltration of the National Student Association by the CIA that financed it secretly from the early 1950s until the 1967 exposure. In that case the "invisible government" used the student organization for coldwar purposes. The exposure almost killed the NSA that once boasted 1.5 million members.

Some young people trapped into a policy of terror are motivated by ideals and think it is "revolutionary." But the consequences serve only reaction, as is evident by the current hysterical effort to turn the police hunt for bombers into a blunderbus against the entire left.

The position of the Trotskyists was clearly stated by the chief theoretician of their "Fourth International," Ernest Mandel, in the June, 1970, issue of the *International Socialist Review*, their magazine. Among the "four pillars of Trotskyism" he listed was "political revolution for socialist democracy in the Soviet bloc." That is the premise for the Trotskyist approach on all issues. Any person or organization friendly to the socialist countries or who favors a

policy of peace and friendship with them is a target of the Trotskyists. They oppose united fronts or any coalitions that include Communists or persons willing to work with Communists. Such unity becomes their target for disruption.

The Trotskyists aim to form rank and file groups. But where do they form them? Mainly in unions led by progressives or others who are considerably to the left of George Meany. Those groups are not formed for positive purposes—to activate the membership, push for advances, or support such advanced action as a union may initiate. They use those groups to factionalize the life of the union, disrupt its meetings and leaflet the members with slanders of those leaders who are distinguished in a progressive way.

One example of their tactic was the February, 1970, "Vanguard Newsletter." This Trotskyist group's leader, Harry Turner, made public his exchange of correspondence with the Spartacist League and the "Workers' League" on his proposal for a three-way Trotskyist cooperation for a "United Front" and a "rank and file caucus" in the progressive-led Drug and Hospital Employees, Local 1199, the union that led the Charleston strike and initiated the formation of a national organization of hospital workers. Their correspondence ended in denouncing each other. But the object of the "united front" was well illustrated in leaflets distributed by these groups to Local 1199 members, mostly Blacks and Spanish, inciting antagonism towards that union's officers.

The experience was similar in 1969 when the 30,000-member District 65, Distributive Workers, disaffiliated from the parent AFL-CIO union after long futile efforts to end the lily-white composition of the parent union's leadership. A Progressive Labor leaflet was distributed charging David Livingstone, president of District 65, with "betraying every District 65 member" by his split although the union's walkout was given near unanimous support, as was its subsequent founding of a national union of distributive workers that became part of the ALA.

Another example was the *Bulletin*, paper of the Workers League, that on May 25, 1970, carried a story headlined "Hill Betrays SSEU Ranks In First Week of Office." Hill was the newly elected president of Social Service Employees Union, Local 371, one of the most progressive units of District Council 37, State, County and Municipal Employees, New York. The story showered slanders like "traitor" against the young black president, who had been in office for only a week.

For whom are they really working? Whom does their splitting and disruption serve? *Their basic approach is that the main fire should be directed against those in the labor movement who follow a progressive course on the ground that their achievement of*

some success and reforms "absorbs" what they call the "revolutionary" spirit. This of course makes them objectively in accord with a George Meany who hates the progressive union leaders and finds the Trotskyist anti-Soviet line most pleasing.

At the June 27-28 conference of rank and file groups in Chicago, the Trotskyist groups had several of their plants there who were busily campaigning for a statement denouncing progressive labor leaders. They called for formation of a "Labor Party" and for setting a date for a "general strike" to end the war in Vietnam. This sounds very "progressive." But only lunatics can see a general strike in a labor movement tightly controlled by reactionaries with the rank and file taking only the first step to organize. The proposal for an "immediate" "mass-based" labor party is either more lunacy or ignorance of the history of "hothouse" labor party efforts based on high-sounding speeches and no significant workingclass base. *They deliberately inject such very radical-sounding demands to deceive the new people coming into the left.*

The disruptive objectives of the Trotskyists were especially well illustrated in a resolution sponsored jointly by their plants in the Chicago conference, although these groups are usually intense rivals. Their resolution demanded "no compromises with so-called 'progressive' trade union bureaucrats, whose politics, no matter how left-sounding, consists essentially of the same reformist accommodation to the capitalist system as the Meanys and the heirs of Reuther." The conference delegates saw through their action and rejected their document.

Even before the Chicago conference began, the Trotskyists distributed a document titled "Workers Action" in which they said, "The 'progressive' 'rank and file' sponsors are more interested in channeling this discontent in a harmless direction for the bureaucrats than they are in real rank and file power."

Progressive Labor and other Maoist type groups are not as widely spread as the Trotskyists, but where they have some contacts in unions, mostly in New York, their methods are similar. They strive to out-left the ultra-leftists and concentrate their most vicious attacks on labor leaders who oppose the Vietnam policy, although they themselves profess to be against the Vietnam policy.

There seems no rational explanation of the disruptive activities of these groups except the suspicion that at least certain of them offer a cover for infiltrators. They have nothing new in the programs they offer.

The approach of the Trotskyists and Maoists towards the black freedom movement follows the same pattern of seeking to narrow the movement, and undermine black-white unity and attack the most advanced forces in the movement. Their main target, when

he was alive, was Dr. Martin Luther King and the movement he headed. On the day of Dr. King's funeral, April 9, 1968, the *New York Times* ran a story of a student meeting at City College, New York, addressed by William Epton, Harlem spokesman for Progressive Labor.

Epton said, according to the *Times*, "We didn't mourn King. We saw King as an obstacle to the Black Liberation movement. We saw King as a fireman for Kennedy and Johnson."

More recently, Epton was expelled by the Progressive Labor group because he charged it neglected the black liberation struggle.

An example of a Trotskyist attitude to Dr. King was an exchange of denunciations between the Bay Area Independent Socialist Club in San Francisco and the Spartacist League, as reported in the latter's publication, "*Spartacist-West*," of August 30, 1967. The Spartacists scorched the ISC for having earlier had some good words for Dr. King although the ICS later corrected its "mistake" with a denunciation of King as a traitor. The Spartacists wrote that "King has long been a betrayer of the black masses in the interest of middle-class tokenism, pacifism and non-violence."

Most objectionable to the Trotskyists, Maoists and some "New Left" people was Dr. King's close association with the more progressive sections of the trade unions as with Drug and Hospital Employees Local 1199, and the UAW. King's heirs continue that policy.

Dr. King was not a Marxist. Nor are those who lead the SCLC today Marxists. But shortly before his death, in an address marking the centennial of Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, King recognized the positive historic role of the Marxists in the United States with respect to the black freedom movement. And it was most of all the Marxists associated with the traditional left and the Communists who recognized the significance of the trend begun by King since the bus boycott of the fifties in Alabama. The "New Lefters," the Trotskyists and Maoists show interest only in the extreme nationalist, separatist groups that have sprung up in some black communities.

What do the intellectuals of the "New Left" offer?

The "New Left"

Ronald Radosh, an assistant professor at Queensborough Community College, has long been regarded as one of the leading lights of the "New Left." Writing in the February, 1963, *Monthly Review*, Radosh found fault with the "Old Left" for involvement in united fronts with "liberals," and for neglecting what he called "revolutionary activity" and showing too much concern with the fascist threat, as in the thirties. He wrote:

"Just as Marxists then sought to build a united front against

fascism, the left today attacks the fascists said to emanate from insignificant and inconsequential rightist groups, ranging from the American Nazi Party and the Minutemen to the Goldwater elements within the Republican Party. Since these groups are defined as the major threat to American security, the left uses the tactic of calling for the defense of the liberal administration against the threat of fascism from the ultra right."

These lines were written about a year before these "insignificant" groups were strong enough at the Republican, 1964, convention to nominate the "insignificant" Goldwater. By the time of the 1968 presidential election, these "insignificant" groups shifted behind the Wallace candidacy that drew 10 million votes, much of it in trade union ranks. A Gallup Poll several weeks before the 1968 voting (*N.Y. Times*, Sept. 11) showed Wallace drawing 15 percent of the vote of unionists nationally (16 percent according to the Harris Poll).

Radosh concluded in his article:

"Leaving medicare and reform to the liberals, socialists could and should reassert the idea of a human society in which the quality of human relationships could blossom. Instead of devoting their time to support of those reform measures which the corporations advance as part of the welfare of corporate capitalism, radicals could and should dispense with liberalism, presenting socialism as an alternative to stagnation and war. The going will be rough and the development of a strong and radical socialist movement will not occur overnight, but it certainly will not develop at all if the ideological orientation of the Left is 'anti-fascist unity' against the mythically conceived threat of a powerful right. Leaving liberalism to liberals, America might yet gain an independent and growing socialist left."

Radosh advanced as new the old stuff that has been costly to the working class and to humanity as a whole. Need we recall the thirties when the Social Democrats of Germany and of other fascist-threatened lands rejected the calls for an anti-fascist united front by the Communist-led left in precisely the language used by Radosh? Hitler's beer hall gangs were "insignificant," they said. Their craze would wear off. The people wouldn't go for them. Need we refer to the disclosures of the many ultra-rightist outfits operating in the United States, with their millions of listeners on radio and TV programs and the mass of printed material they dish out to the public via the post office?

As for Radosh's suggestion that the struggle for immediate issues and reforms be left to the "liberals" and revolution and socialism to the radicals, that's one of the oldest diseases in American working class history.

The Socialist Labor Party, the first Marxist party in the country, nearing the ripe old age of ninety, has been afflicted almost all its life with the concept that it need only be occupied with preaching socialism and studying dogma, and leave the struggle for immediate needs to others. When the Revolution comes, the SLP leaders will presumably be on hand, inform the masses they are the anointed leaders and show their credentials.

Reformists are those who separate the struggle for immediate demands and democratic reforms from the ultimate aim of socialism; who believe they can get concessions and reforms without struggle; who don't see the struggle for improvements NOW as also a means of raising the class consciousness, unity level and militancy of the workers; who fail to initiate new and higher level immediate objectives for the betterment of conditions for the workers. The working class struggles without the "radicals," but an active participation of progressives can make the struggle more effective and more meaningful in terms of the longer-range aims of the working class. *That's the role that makes a "radical" a revolutionary, because that's the type of leadership that wins a mass support strong enough to force a fundamental change. To leave the struggle for immediate issues to "liberals" is only to reduce the "radicals" to dogmatic sects with no contacts among the masses they aim to lead to socialism.*

The irony is that while Radosh was penning his essay for the "New Left" masses of people across the country were engaged in an intense struggle for medicare—limited as that concession is. Has the eventual enactment of medicare into law "appeased" the masses and "absorbed" their militancy against capitalist conditions? The fact is that since enactment, the movement among the senior citizens has even broadened and become better organized, in a struggle for improvements in the law which they discovered to contain objectionable fine print and provisions for escalating costs. But even more important, enactment of medicare and its very limited help for those above 65 triggered a movement now spreading for real health insurance, paid by the government, FOR ALL.

The presumption by the "New Lefters" that a cynical reference to medicare would go well with the young people is false. The younger people who now must pay as much as \$100 a day at hospitals for childbirth are very much interested in a government-paid health insurance plan.

Has Radosh learned anything since 1963? In his "American Labor

and United States Foreign Policy" (Random House, 1969) he writes that "we have had a corporate state in the United States" that has "come to resemble the type of business-government alliance established by Benito Mussolini in fascist Italy." (p. 28) And we now have "corporate unions" and a "total absorption of American unions in the corporate capitalist structure." (p. 451) Radosh further discovered that it was Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal that inaugurated this Mussolini type corporate state system. He writes:

"To keep such a machine functioning smoothly, the corporate national class required the aid of a state-regulated and approved movement. Such a brand of unionism would help the corporations maintain their hegemonic control over American society.

"It was essentially for this reason that Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration had aided in the development of the CIO. The new industrial union federation served as a government created instrument that enabled sophisticated corporate leaders to overcome the resistance to change of both old style laissez faire capitalists and old craft unions that refused to accept the statist structure. Organized labor could not be integrated into the system via the craft unions which are insufficiently structured to aid unskilled labor. Thus the National Recovery Administration (the New Deal machinery—G.M.) turned unionism into a semi-public institution whose organization was a part of the official government program." pp. 25-26)

Radosh in a footnote says he is indebted for this peculiar analysis to "the anarchist writer Sam Weiner." This anarchist line, discredited generations ago, has been embraced by Radosh and other "New Lefters" and proclaimed from the rooftops as something "new." They assert the unions are part of what they say is a "corporate state" machinery and this is evidence that the working class is not, as Marxists have been stressing, the leading class for progress and ultimately for the establishment of socialism. They argue that some other sectors of the population must be looked to for that role. To "prove" their case they play on the ignorance of history, especially among many of the younger people. They say Roosevelt set up the CIO because it was needed as an instrument for setting the workers into the fascist-like "corporate state." And Radosh adds (p. 452) that "labor was tamed when the new CIO began functioning."

Was labor tamed? The "wildest" days of labor history were in those very days of the new CIO. Those were days of the GM sitdown strike, of sitdowns and militant walkouts from coast to

coast. Many of the battles were bloody, like the Memorial Day massacre of Republic strikers in South Chicago in 1937 in which 10 strikers died. The five general strikes of the steel union since its formation came to a total idleness of more than six months.

Radosh, an assistant professor of history(?) and spokesman for the "New Lefters", would have us see the workers as just so many chess pieces moved at will by a Roosevelt or some other president. The struggle of the workers doesn't seem to matter. He doesn't even look inside labor for any possible differentiation between those who resist and those who are with the employers. He is afraid to look too closely lest he see something that will shatter the theory that the working class, its unions and all leaders are "totally absorbed" into the "corporate state" establishment.

It shouldn't be difficult to recognize how Radosh and Joe Beirne and Meany agree that labor is part of the capitalist establishment. The theory that the "new CIO" was set up to fit the workers into the establishment is most pleasing to the extreme conservatives in the craftist unions of the old AFL, especially in the building trades.

Radosh advances a "new" labor policy. We need a new labor movement, he says, adding: "Since the days of the revolutionary Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) there has been no independent union movement controlled by its own rank and file and not tied to the machinery of the state." (p. 29) He says the likely course is "organization outside the framework of existing unions." (p. 452) Thus we are to turn back to the anarcho-syndicalist IWW founded 65 years ago to see our future. Again we are to call on workers to leave their unions and come over to new "revolutionary" unions. And we are expected to dust off Father Haggerty's cart-wheel map of industrial unions to show us the "new society within the shell of the old."

Radosh is entirely wrong, of course, when he claims there have been no independent unions controlled by the rank and file, since the IWW. There have been and there are, such unions, with a membership many times the 30,000 that marked the IWW's high point. The Trade Union Unity League of left-led unions had more than 200,000 members when most of its affiliates merged with the larger rising CIO movement. They had a far higher level of democracy than the IWW's deliberate design for anarchistic instability. There are unions today, like District 65 in New York, that have a higher level of both democracy and progressivism. There are many unions within the AFL-CIO, too, that have a high level of democracy and that are independent.

The trouble with Prof. Radosh and with so many of the New Left ideologists, is that they are too impatient to read even available history, and they have a distorted, middle-class view of U.S.

unions. Radosh is like many other intellectuals who, unlike the intellectuals of the stormy thirties, are isolated from the working class and its organizations and really don't know what's inside them.

The IWW made history. Many of the working class movement learned their ABC's in the IWW. Its major founder and leader during its best days, William Haywood, died a Communist. William Z. Foster, longtime Communist Party chairman, who became the sharpest critic of the IWW, had early membership in it. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, an outstanding leader of the IWW in its heyday, was for many years, until her death, chairman of the C.P. In its early years the IWW made contributions to the labor movement that in time influenced its entire fabric. *But the basic fact is, as proven by experience in the U.S. and the world, that workers refuse to leave their established trade unions because even under reactionary leadership, unions are the only protection and security they have in meeting the problems under capitalism.*

When the IWW was founded, the AFL had 1,500,000 members, out of a total union membership of over 2,000,000 in the country. There was then (in 1905) at least a reasonable ground to argue that another labor federation had plenty of ground to build on, because fewer than 10 percent of the workers, very few in the major industries, were unionized. But it just didn't happen. By the early twenties, there was little more than a shadow of the IWW. How can one possibly conceive of success for a new IWW three generations later when union membership is nine-fold, mostly on an industrial basis, with most key, commanding industries organized? Unfortunately there are many people today with romantic "revolutionary" notions whose knowledge of the IWW comes mostly from what they read in its song book (still on sale) and who easily fall for "New Left" fancies like those of Prof. Radosh. And he is not the only such labor "strategist" as we shall see.

Space in this work does not permit an extensive examination of Radosh's 1969 book. But it provides an interesting pattern of the way some "New Left" ideologues, either out of ignorance or deliberate design, close their eyes to past experience lest it shatter their preconceived notions.

Prof. Radosh's view of labor hardly differs from that of the Trotskyists and Maoists. Like the Trotskyists and Maoists he singles out the late Walter Reuther for attack. (p. 451). In summary, if Radosh, a leading light in the "New Left" is a sample, they haven't anything that's new. They have dug up some long discarded junk and try to palm it off to newcomers as something new.

CHAPTER XIII

LOOKING FOR A "NEW" CLASS

At the root of much that is written or said in the name of the "New Left" is the isolation of its spokesmen from the working class and their inability to understand the change in its composition due to the technological changes in recent years. From this stems their outlook of virtual denial of the class struggle, a position that brings them quite close to the position of the labor bureaucracy, which also denies there is a class struggle.

To support their argument that the workers do not and will not lead the struggle for progress or for a socialist society, the "New Lefters" agree basically with capitalist propaganda that the working class is declining numerically, that more and more of it is becoming "middle class" or is wiped out by the new technology. The "New Left" ideologues could very well agree with Meany and Beirne, for example, that "the wage earners in general are part of the affluent society." They are therefore "incorporated" into the capitalist order. If that proposition were true, what is left of the class struggle? But as we have observed earlier, both the labor bureaucrats and the "New Lefters" are wrong, because the working class in general is not "affluent" and notwithstanding the efforts of some labor leaders and the opinions of some "New Lefters," even conservative-led unions cannot be dragged into incorporation in the capitalist establishment.

The working class is today more numerous and is a higher percentage of the population than it has ever been. The working class includes all persons who work for wages because to live they must sell their physical or brain power to those who own the means of production. Only utopian romanticists who still see a worker in the 18th century way, as a man who can show calloused palms, can take seriously the nonsense peddled by capitalist propagandists.

There were times when similar arguments were made in face of earlier stages of new technology. The increase in the number of office workers and in other white collar occupations, and in the number of technicians, was seen as a sign of a "disappearing" working class. But as time passed, people began to see that those in white collars and cleaner clothes did not differ basically from those who toiled with their hands. Before long those workers too

joined unions and walked picket lines. White collar membership in unions rose to 3.2 million by 1968, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Since then the number took a more significant jump, especially in government employment.

The class status of a person is not determined by the color of the work shirt, or whether he or she gets dirty on the job, nor even by the size of the wage. *It is determined by the relation of the wage earner to those who own the establishment where the worker must work to earn a living.* There are some workers who may earn considerably above the average wage, perhaps even more than some in the "middle class." The new technologies brought forth some new occupations and skills that command higher wages. But they are in the working class.

For a number of years the *Monthly Review*, *New Left Notes* and other publications have been in a race with space-age fiction writers to predict the doom of the worker. This was their "profound" contribution to "left" thinking. But parallel with their output on typewriters, more and more of the "middle class" workers—teachers, college professors, stage and film stars, office employees, engineers, laboratory technicians, hospital physicians, registered nurses, computer programmers, baseball and football league players—have been joining unions and walking picket lines, for months in some cases. And they were not joining to be incorporated into the "corporate state!"

A serious examination of the composition of the working class in historic perspective will show that the working class has been changing in composition uninterruptedly since the 19th century Industrial Revolution. But those changes never alter the basic fact, that the working class is numerically the largest class and is steadily increasing in number.

Ever since the "New Left" began its search for a new class to fit into its "revolutionary" perspective, its publications have printed extensive articles on the need for a reexamination of the "lumpenproletariat." One such article, for example, in the November, 1964, issue of the *Monthly Review*, by George and Louis Crowley, declared that "only those who have no stake in the present institutions" are a potential force for revolution. "It follows," the article continued, "that the working class, mortally concerned as it is to preserve the value of labor power, is not the class to bring about the revolution."

In tune with capitalist propagandists, the Crowleys also found that "the working class itself has attained a degree of social privilege Marx did not believe possible under capitalism." Then turning their eyes to the "lumpenproletariat" the Crowleys rightly pointed out that this "declassed scum of society, Marx characterized as a

rotting mass, now and then to be swept into a revolutionary movement but on the whole better fitted to be informers, scabs and goons in the service of the bourgeoisie. He was undoubtedly right!" But they go into a lot of copy to build up a case for the lumpens as a revolutionary potential.

"It's time we re-appraise them," wrote the Crowleys. "They are the hard core unemployed and the young people who will never find jobs. They are the ex-miners of Appalachia and the ex-auto workers of Detroit. A great many of them are Negro, many are Puerto-Rican, Mexican-American and Indian. It's absurd to call these people workers. They do not work; they do not expect to work again, as they adapt to their new conditions of life, they do not want to work. Living on relief or (statistically) on air, they are the most depressed element of modern society, Proletarians in the Roman sense: people of no value to the social order. They are no longer even needed as strikebreakers; machines do it better. A government economist has dubbed them 'no-people.'"

This is not a description of only the lumpens. This is a deliberate effort to mix into that element the unemployed, families on relief and other sectors of the poor who in no way fit into the category of "lumpenproletariat." The basic elements that make up the "lumpenproletariat" are precisely the type Marx referred to, as the Crowleys noted, of whom there are many more today than in Marx's time because the social degeneration capitalism produces in its last stages augments their number. There is far more crime, far more narcotic addiction, more prostitution, more surrender by many to despair and hopelessness. To mix into this group families who live on relief, social security checks or food stamps, or the many young people out of school who haven't found work, is an insult to these people.

The elementary lesson since the Mussolini and Hitlerite hordes came on the world scene is that the declassed lumpen elements were a natural for them as supporters in the initial stages. These people have no relation to production or working class activities and hence have no class outlook. But people on relief or social security, working part time or jobless, maintain their ties to labor, the community, senior citizens clubs or unemployment and tenant organizations. Many are active in those movements. And we see, the ALA aims to encourage such activity. But the Crowleys simply had to manufacture a new "class" to make what they call "the revolution."

What do the Crowleys mean by "revolution?" They say that "in the activities of the lumpens themselves we see an approach more

congruous with the aims of revolution." And they add that "the normal *modus operandi* of the lumpenproletariat is also the logical tactic of the anarchist revolution."

"Despite its sometimes nihilistic outlook," they wrote, "we acknowledge its revolutionary potential. As the practicability of an anarchic society on a cybernated economic base is popularized, it will find its direction and purpose." By revolution, therefore, they mean the "anarchist revolution" and by "socialism" they mean "an anarchic society."

Anarchism is hardly new. It has been an influence in sections of the working class for more than a century. But under Marx's leadership, that trend was basically defeated. For a while it had a base in the trade unions of many countries, where industrial development was at an early stage. But, as Lenin observed, it was mainly an "infantile disorder"—a stage at which workers were only at an early level of struggle and lacked experience.

Essentially anarchists have had visions of a society without authority. They even reject a working class state as a transition to what they call a socialist order. Much of their thinking still retains the utopianism of the period that preceded the founding of scientific socialism by Marx and Engels.

Another general characteristic of the anarchist movements of the past, getting some revival under "New Left" influence, is terrorist activity like bombing and other acts of desperation that only have the effect of provocation and adverse results for the left in general. Nor is it an accident that the "New Left" should see the long-dead anarcho-syndicalist IWW as its model of unionism.

The confusion of the "New Lefters" has also had some influence in certain black freedom circles. Eldridge Cleaver wrote a pamphlet in which he attacked the Communists and Marx for the view that the working class is the leading force for progress. Apparently he, too, sees the working class in the image of a George Meany. Cleaver, too, argues that the lumpens are the primary base for progress. And he, like the Crowleys, also throws the millions of peoples of the ghettos into the lumpen class.

Program of Isolation

An anarcho-syndicalist program was spelled out in detail for the "New Left" by Stanley Aronowitz, who wrote on trade union affairs for the *Guardian* but later switched to the "liberated" *Guardian* after the unsuccessful "take-over" by his ultra-leftist associates. A series of eight articles he wrote in the *Guardian* prior to his departure, on the "future of trade unionism," was mainly an attack on the Communist Party for its view that unions are instru-

ments of struggle. He argues, as Radosh does, that unions are the means of "integrating the workers into the corporate capitalist system" and "disciplining" them in production. He further asserts that "the collective bargaining agreement has become the heart of class collaboration between the unions and corporations." Through the bargaining agreement he declares the class struggle has "become regulated" and the employers "regard labor leaders as their allies against the ignorant and undisciplined rank and file workers," and the union is used "as an appendage of the corporations." The system of "integrating" the unions with the corporations is pictured by Aronowitz as fully accomplished, with the bargaining contract only "a bill of sale."

Work within the existing trade unions is useless and only retards the movement, he goes on, so the "revolutionary working class movement requires a new practice" to build a "new kind of workers' power"—the "workers' councils" that would be "a form of dual power" to "push through the revolutionary struggle."

Through the eight long articles, Aronowitz runs wild with "revolutionism" and attacks on Marxists. One of history's big "mistakes" was the emergence of Communist parties, especially in the United States, he writes. He conceives of a "movement" that would be without a workers' party, with his "council" taking care of everything politically, economically and socially. He raps the Communists for not anticipating an early revolution in the United States and demands that what he calls "revolution" must "become part of the daily lives of the people."

There is no need to wait for a "revolutionary situation," writes Aronowitz; "it must become part of the immediate strategy." There is no need of a party because the masses must be a "self-acting" force. He finds that the IWW fits into that pattern. He also expresses preference for ultra-leftist, separatist groups among black workers.

At first glance it appears that Aronowitz may differ with some of the other "New Left" ideologies because he writes a program designed to win workers. But in substance he, no less than the others, denies the role of the working class, because in effect he writes off the 19 million organized workers as part of the "corporate" system. His plan of "councils" as a "dual" movement is nothing but a sham to cover up what amounts to a denial of the role of the working class. As we observed in dealing with the same Radosh line, in the light of experience with the IWW and since its demise in the twenties, the idea of trying such a dual effort again a half century later is nonsense. Aronowitz must surely be aware of that, but apparently he thinks that his "program" would be of tactical value in combatting the charge that the "New Lefters" ignore the working class.

The saturation of "New Left" literature with "revolutionary" phraseology is deliberate. They believe that this is an effective way to impute "reformism" to the traditional Marxist-Leninist left. *In reality it indicates they have nothing new but refurbished approaches junked generations ago.* What they mean by "revolution" and "socialism" is anybody's guess. As we have seen, the trend among their ideologists is towards anarchism.

They ignore the long-tested lessons by Marx and Lenin that true social revolutions are not made to order, are not sparked by some dramatic conspiratorial or terrorist acts; they cannot be imported or exported and can only mature with mass support at home. They close their eyes to the experience since the Russian Revolution that revolutions come out of conditions under which people can not even live as before. It is only the effective mass-based and political leadership of a PARTY that can in the midst of such a crisis lead the people to a social system offering a basic solution to the problems that caused the crisis. The romantic "revolutionary" notions of the "New Lefters" have a closer likeness to Hollywood versions of rebellions than to the works of the founders of socialism, especially of Lenin who led the revolution that established the first socialist state. Nor have they paid attention to the numerous tragic rebellions in history that were drowned in blood because they were conceived by people who were alienated from the masses or believed that a handful could "trigger" a revolution.

The notions emanating from a Radosh or an Aronowitz illustrate well how alienated some people can be from the real world and how dangerous they can be if they get into a position to lead people. Those who have never been in a union or shop may believe the idea that a labor contract, as Aronowitz writes, prevents struggle and makes unions an "appendage" to the corporations. But what are the facts? The intensity and scope of labor struggles became far greater when unions began to win recognition and written contracts. It is over provisions of the contract that most struggles take place. Collective bargaining is really a system not for setting the rules for class peace but for class warfare.

Where an agreement is used to impose bad conditions on workers, or where enforcement of contract provisions is neglected, workers usually engage in shop struggles, or even "wildcat" and other "unorthodox" actions, with or without the authority of their officials. Of course there are reactionary officials who work with employers to restrain struggles or even "sell-out" the interests of their members. If there weren't, the situation would be very much different in the U.S. labor movement. But in recent years it is the labor leader who tries to work with the employer who is more and more on the defensive, because an increasingly high percentage

of contracts negotiated by labor leaders are rejected by the members and sent back for further negotiations. Such resistance is *within* the framework of existing unions. It is pressure for improvement *within* and not for an exit to some new "revolutionary councils."

A half century ago Lenin, concerned over a tendency among the left people in several countries, including the U.S., to leave mass-based unions headed by reactionaries, wrote "Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder," to warn against such foolishness.

"There can be no doubt, that the Gomperses, the Hendersons, the Jouhaux and Legiens are very grateful to the 'left revolutionaries' who like the German opposition on principle (heaven preserve us from such principles) or some revolutionaries in the American Industrial Workers of the World, advocate quitting reactionary unions and refusing to work in them," wrote Lenin, referring to heads of the unions of major capitalist countries.

Lenin termed "ridiculous and childish nonsense the pompous, very learned and frightfully revolutionary disquisitions of the German lefts to the effect that Communists cannot and should not work in reactionary trade unions, that it is permissible to turn down such work, that it is necessary to withdraw from the trade unions and to create a brand new immaculate 'workers Union' invented by pleasant (and probably for the most part very youthful) Communists." That was a half century ago. But how perfectly Lenin sized up Stanley Aronowitz! At bottom, observed Lenin in the same book, is the relationship between revolutionists and the masses. To win the masses, Communists "should not fear difficulties, or pinpricks, chicanery, insults and persecution from the 'leaders' . . . *but must absolutely work wherever the masses are found*," he wrote.

The ultra-leftists of all stripes don't think they need to win the masses. To them, most of the masses are "integrated" in the capitalist establishment, and cannot be won. So why undergo the difficulties of working within unions? *They rely on small conspiratorial groups that can some day make the "revolution" FOR the masses.*

Lenin wrote a great deal about the "revolutionary" phrasemonsters of his time who have again appeared as Trotskyists, Maoists, and "New Lefters" of the Radosh, Aronowitz type.

"Revolutionary phrase-making, more often than not," he wrote, "is a disease from which revolutionary parties suffer at times when they constitute, directly or indirectly, a combination, alliance or intermingling of proletarian and petty bourgeois elements, and when the course of revolutionary events is marked by big, rapid zigzags. By revolutionary

phrasemaking we mean the repetition of revolutionary slogans, irrespective of objective circumstances at a given turn of events, in the given state of affairs obtaining at the time. The slogans are superb, alluring, intoxicating, but there are no grounds for them; such is the nature of the revolutionary phrase." (p. 19, "The Revolutionary Phrase," Progress Publishers, Moscow, written in 1918)

In another article on the "itch" some people have for revolutionary phrase-making, Lenin wrote:

"Often this distortion arises from the best, the noblest and loftiest of impulses 'merely' owing to a failure to digest well-known theoretical truths, or a childish, crude, schoolboyish slavish repetition of them irrelevantly (people don't know what's what) but the itch does not cease to be harmful on that account."

On the same subject, we have the words of another authority who was involved more recently in leading a revolution, Fidel Castro, in a speech April 22, 1970, marking the Lenin centenary:

"As we all know, there are today super-revolutionary theoreticians, superleftists, veritable Supermen, if you like—to give them some name—capable of disemboweling imperialism in two seconds, in words: many super-revolutionists who haven't the slightest notion of reality or of the problems and difficulties involved in a revolution; urged on by that feeling nurtured by imperialism, they bear tremendous hatred. It is as if they could not forgive the Soviet Union for existing, and this, from leftist positions." (quoted from text, Daily World, May 30, 1970)

The "itch" for revolutionary phrase-making is strong in some people especially in times when workers are more militant, and struggles are widespread, as currently in the United States. They falsely picture a "revolutionary" situation. The net result of their work is provocation and objectively invaluable service to the ultra-right. Such influences are also evident in sections of the black freedom movement that involves large masses in struggle.

They reflect in general all the features of ultra-leftism we have observed, and some of them merge with nationalist and separatist trends, including in a few instances separation of black workers from the mass unions, into separate black organizations. But far more significant is the fact that even where an appeal for a black union appeared attractive, it did not materialize. The 2,000,000 black workers in unions are staying where they are. And judging

by the vigorous struggle of the newly organized black workers, there is no doubt as to where the unorganized black workers are going. They want a union movement strong enough to win justice for them and they intend to make the union carry out that role.

The Communists and the traditional left in the United States, have been committed for a half century to a policy of working where the masses are. The position so well outlined by Lenin and by William Z. Foster, the late chairman of the C.P., has been the basic guide. That policy stood the test in the United States both through its success where it was applied and through the negative results where it was forgotten.

The basic principle is that the progressive forces must strive to influence the largest number of workers for advanced action. This is why, since the earliest days of organized progressive work within unions, reactionary labor leaders with the aid of the employers and the government, have sought through maneuvers or repression, to isolate progressives from the mass of workers.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PHILOSOPHER OF THE "NEW LEFT"

The "New Left" is hardly what may be called an organized movement. It is more a trend of an assortment of radical intellectuals and students expressed in a number of publications, occasional dialogues and symposiums that only show their great variety of views. They all claim to be for socialism, but what they mean by socialism is a big question among the "New Lefters" and among others who try to understand them.

They all attack the Communists, the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, or what they call the "old left," to "justify" their efforts to form a "new left." Their grounds for doing it are as varied and as vague as their concepts of socialism.

One common base underlies the approach of the "New Lefters"; they consciously or unconsciously capitalize on the generation-long cold war and anti-communist drive and the image that the House Un-American Committee, a Joe McCarthy or J. Edgar Hoover gave the public of Marxism-Leninism and the Communist Party. They tacitly accept that image, by a failure to challenge it, and exploit prejudices to bolster the "need" of a new left.

Most young people associated with the "New Left" were in their cradles when McCarthyism was riding high. The false McCarthyite image or the more subtle anti-communism of the rightwing social democrats, became imprinted in the minds of young people through textbooks and in the general atmosphere in which they grew up. This closed the minds of many to the truth and conditioned them to a "new" left through which to express their radicalism and position toward capitalism.

The confused, negative and aimless approach of the "New Left" is given a philosophical format in the works of Herbert Marcuse, Professor of Philosophy at the University of California in San Diego. For many years a critic of Marxism, Marcuse has had his works published by large firms and is given wide publicity through interviews and other forms in the large circulation press. It is not within the scope of this book to examine Marcuse's position extensively. But parts of his most widely circulated book in "New Left" ranks, "One-Dimensional Man" (Beacon Press, 1964), will indicate

the ideological source of their attitude toward the working class and the trade unions. In Marcuse's view the trend is not toward people becoming the masters over technology. Technology, he says, is already in power over the people, and society in the industrially developed lands "tends to become totalitarian to the extent to which it determines not only the socially needed occupations, skills and attitudes, but also individual needs and aspirations." (pp. 15-16 in the introduction)

Marcuse pictures capitalism expanding to become an octopus that controls and determines every detail of life and forces all the people and organizations to conform to it, and that shapes the thoughts and attitudes so as to even *eliminate the will to struggle and protest*. He says that this "may be a regrettable and yet promising development." He sees a "one dimensional society" without conflict in it because it is "a society which seems increasingly capable of satisfying the needs of the individuals through the way in which it is organized" and adds that "under the conditions of a rising standard of living non-conformity with the system itself appears to be socially useless." (pp. 1-2)

"The loss of the economic and political liberties which were the real achievement of the preceding two centuries may seem slight damage in a state capable of making the administered life secure and comfortable," writes Marcuse (p. 50) as he repeatedly assures us that the people will just take it and like it. And with a few strokes of his pen he "demolishes" Marx because it is a society in which "class struggles are attenuated" and "depressions are controlled." The contradiction of greater productivity due to developing technology and lagging consumer demand will not exist in the "one-dimensional" society because it will "create the need for buying the goods that must be profitably sold." (p. 35) Marcuse repeatedly stresses how consumer demand will be deliberately stimulated to bring the market in line with production. "And if the individuals are pre-conditioned so that the satisfying goods also include thoughts, feelings, aspirations, why should they wish to think, feel or imagine for themselves?" he asks. (p. 50)

But the greatest feat of Herbert Marcuse is his virtual elimination of capitalism's historic enemy, the working class, and thereby his "refutation" of Marx's statement that the working class is the gravedigger of capitalism. He says that automation is refuting Marx's theory—that only human expenditure of labor adds value in the process of production. Thereby, of course, he disposes of the theory of surplus value—the value added by the worker for which the worker doesn't get paid, from which profit is derived. Marcuse says it is the new technology that adds value, hence there is no exploitation of workers. That becomes the economic basis for elimination

of workers as the class antagonistic to capitalism. To put it in Marcuse's words:

"The new technological work-world thus enforces a weakening of the negative position of the working class; the latter no longer appears to be the living contradiction of the established society." (p. 31) And he explains "an overriding interest in the preservation and improvement of the institutional status quo unites the former antagonists in the most advanced areas of contemporary society."

Such is the reasoning by the philosopher of the "New Left" that provides the ground for the cry that the "working class and the unions are part of the establishment," therefore that some other sectors of the population must be found for struggle and protest. That latter problem is treated by Marcuse in the last two pages of his 257-page book. Marcuse observes that the traditional ways of "protest" are no longer effective because the people "previously the ferment of social change have 'moved up' to become the ferment for social cohesion" (p. 256), meaning that the workers who "previously" struggled against capitalism are now a force for unity with capitalism! But for the embattled "New Lefters" Marcuse still has hope—although a very faint hope. He goes on:

"However, underneath the conservative popular base is the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and unemployable. They exist outside the democratic process; their life is the most immediate and the most real need for ending intolerable conditions and institutions. Thus their opposition is revolutionary even if their consciousness is not. . . . The fact that they start refusing to play the game may be the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period." (pp. 256-257)

As an after-thought it came to Marcuse that he couldn't end the book on a dead-end note—with no perspective of any pressure from people for progress—as though history will no longer be made by people. So he professes to keep the door slightly ajar for "refusal," as he terms resistance, by people who may not share the glorious benefits of the "one-dimensional society."

Having incorporated the entire working class into the "one-dimensional" system, and the intellectuals, professionals who wallow in its affluence, Marcuse still sees that "unconscious" but "popular" base for resistance in the "substratum of the outcasts and outsiders." Marcuse is down to the lumpens for any hope of "revolutionary" action. His confidence is clearly not very strong in that

group, so he artificially grafts on to that strata the black and other minority peoples and the unemployed. This is nothing but a falsehood. As I observed earlier concerning the way the anarchist Crowleys, similarly to Marcuse, tried to mix the millions of minority peoples in the U.S. and the unemployed and families on relief into the lumpenproletariat, this is done deliberately to give an impression that there is a substantial force outside the working class that can provide a new force for struggle.

Marcuse's own theses should refute that kind of false combination. If the workers are in the "establishment" then so are the black and Hispanic sections of the working class. In those sections of the population the working class proportion is even higher than among the whites. And 2,000,000 black workers are in unions in common action with the white workers.

Marcuse's effort to find a "revolutionary" force outside the working class led him to the declassed elements, those with neither initiative nor hope, hardly the types that are the driving force of history. But how hopeful is Marcuse himself? His entire book reads like a prophecy of doom and he frankly admits he sees no effective resistance to the "one-dimensional" trend he finds.

"Nothing indicates that it will be a good end," is the way he starts the closing paragraph of his book. "The economic and technical capabilities of the established societies are sufficiently vast to allow for adjustments and concessions to the underdog, and their armed forces sufficiently trained and equipped to take care of emergency situations. . . . It is nothing but a chance. The critical theory of society possesses no concepts which could bridge the gap between the present and its future: holding no promise and showing no success, it remains negative. Thus it wants to remain loyal to those who, without hope, have given their life to the Great Refusal." (p. 257)

The final sentence characterizes the entire book and the Marcusean philosophy. He sneers at and mocks with contempt the millions throughout the world who are struggling for progress and socialism. He tells them they are wasting their effort and that their vanguard forces are activists only because they are "loyal" to a cause "without hope," Marcuse gave a philosophical form to a viewpoint younger radicals often get from oldsters with case-hardened minds whose stock phrases are, "It's no use," "Don't knock yourself out" and "The people will always be fooled and like it."

It is precisely in his "no hope" and "it's no use" philosophy that Marcuse renders the most invaluable service to present day capitalism and reaction in general. This is why he has received for a

time wide publicity and why he is referred to as a "Marxist" although he has always been a critic of Marxism. *He is useful as the "Marxist philosopher" who says "there is no hope."* His professed bemoaning of the "one-dimensional" trend doesn't worry the ideologists of capitalism.

After reading Marcuse's "One-Dimensional Man" it wouldn't be hard to recognize where some of the leading "New Lefts" drew their ideas from. The Marcuse picture of a society going to hell had a popular ring for a period among the new wave of people radicalized by dissatisfaction over war, racism, and related effects. But his view that even the working class and its organizations are imprisoned in the "one-dimensional" society left his admirers suspended with no perspective. For that reason we saw those who seek a base for a "new" left look into movements that have been junked many years ago to substitute for the historic left which Marcus claims has "no promise" and is "without hope."

Marx has observed that "history repeats itself the first time as a tragedy, the second as a farce." History has recorded the tragic outcome of anarchist efforts to use declassed lumpen elements and their divisive efforts to build unions in rivalry with the masses of organized workers; of the tactics of terror, assassinations and bombings. Those who have no faith in the working class and believe the Marcuse thesis either go over bag and baggage to capitalism or express their radicalism in acts of desperation. Either course serves capitalism. There is still a third course that some radicals seem to take, and it is perhaps most in line with the Marcusean theses of hopelessness. It is escapism. This we see in the rash of hippie type "youth communes" in the mountains and deserts of New Mexico, or in areas of California and Hawaii, for example, to "get away from it all," as described in *The New York Times* of Aug. 3, 1970.

The popularity of Marcuse has been wearing off fast in recent years as many followers of the radical wave take a closer look into his work and give it some serious thought. For many it has been like discovering the small print in a contract. His "One-Dimensional Man" was widely accepted as a text for new radicals when it came out in 1964, shortly before the world-wide rise in the struggle for peace, the campus rebellions, labor strikes and the current more advanced stage of worker-influenced black freedom struggles. For people in the midst of strikes and other struggles to be told that the workers are on the other side of the struggle and to be advised that their struggles are hopeless is either sheer lunacy or service to reaction.

Marcuse uses an involved terminology that only a handful of intellectuals take the trouble to read, but an assortment of "new left" preachers had been handing out "popular" versions of the

Marcuse cult. They rode the wave until people took a closer look.

From the very inception of the "New Left" trend, the Communist Party, although welcoming the fact that large numbers were joining the ranks of radicals, warned of the crop of propagandists of "new capitalism" and leftist phrase-mongers who work to divert the new onrushing stream from the historic course of the left. The Party's warning came to a climax at its July, 1968, convention, while Marcuse's banner was still waving high in radical circles. Gus Hall, general secretary of the Party, in his report to the convention, sounded a sharp warning against widespread tendencies in the left to downgrade the role of the working class and to get away from a class view of capitalism and the class nature of the struggle against it. He particularly directed his fire at the Marcuse concept that there is no longer a class struggle. Hall said:

"There are dozens of variations of Marcuse floating around, who is himself only a variation of a hundred and fifty years of anti-working class, petty-bourgeois radicalism. Petty bourgeois radicalism has always tried to get around and away from dealing with the class structure of capitalist society. . . .

"One variation concludes that 'only those *outside the production process* can be a force to change the order of things.' This, of course, rules out the 65 million workers in the U.S. 'production process' and their families who make up the majority of our people. But in a basic sense it rules out exploitation at the point of production, as the heart, as the incubator, as the factor that gives rise to classes and class struggle. In fact petty-bourgeois radicalism now speaks of 'neo-capitalism' in which exploitation in production is not the root of its evil."

Hall noted some of the stock phrases in the printed matter of the new lefters: "In an industrial society, the working class has lost its revolutionary spirit and therefore also its progressive role." "The working class has become part of the establishment." "The working class has become a partner and an affluent recipient of the loot of imperialism."

Dealing with the Marcusean view that capitalism can control recessions, Hall said:

"What is this so-called neo-capitalism? It's a kind of Christmas goose capitalism. They say it is forced to stuff its people—to force feed them—like a Christmas goose. Why does this neo-capitalism do this? Because it produces so much that it needs an internal market. They call it 'compul-

sive consumption.' They say that is why Santa Claus is the symbol of this neo-capitalism.

"What are the instruments of this stuffing, this force-feeding? The trade unions with their economic demands—with their collective bargaining. This leads to their conclusion—and I quote:

"The new technology of automation and cybernation . . . creates a new set of relationships which transcend the traditional conception of the exploitation of labor as the basic motor of class conflict and revolutionary consciousness."

"It leads to a 'one-dimensional society' and not the dimensions of two classes. The 'central aim' of such theories is anti-working class.

"It is obvious that if one, to any extent, accepts this concept, he will lose all enthusiasm for strikes and really be against strikes, because he will see them only as means for stuffing the goose."

Warning against minimizing the danger in some of the concepts of the Marcusean stripe, Hall concluded, "Make no mistake about it—we have the choice of accepting the challenge or being engulfed by it. It is an anti-working class concept sugar-coated by left phrases."

Since that 1968 warning there has been a sobering up among some who took a fancy to "new leftism." Many examined Marcuse against the realities. The same happened in some European lands where new young radicals, as in the United States, at first cheered what they thought was something new. But the most severe blow to Marcuseanism came with the demonstration of its logic in practice by the provocative no-win rampage of desperation violence and recourse to bombing, by followers of the anarchist Weatherman faction of the SDS.

CHAPTER XV

WHAT IS THE RANK AND FILE?

What is a "rank and file" movement in unions? Groups of that nature are not necessarily named "rank and file." Most are not. They may call themselves a "caucus for democracy," a "black caucus," a "new deal caucus," a "progressive committee," a "committee for equal rights" or any of 100 more of such names. Some rank and file movements bear no name, but function, nevertheless, as a militant progressive force in the union, possibly through its shop stewards council.

Rank and file movements have had a long history in U.S. unions. Their need grew and spread because much of the U.S. union movement is bureaucratically run, with little opportunity for members to have much say in its affairs. Rank and file groups have been institutionalized in some unions for as long as 30 and 40 years, putting out their publications, advancing candidates for union office, meeting periodically or regularly and taking an active part in initiating issues affecting contract negotiations or the interest of the members in other ways.

Groups bearing the name of "Rank and File" have been in existence uninterruptedly in some locals of the International Ladies Garment Workers since the mid-twenties. The Rank and File group of Painters, District Council 9, N.Y., has been in existence since the mid-thirties.

Times change, of course, and issues change. Technology forced many new problems to the fore. Trade union membership has increased and the composition of the working class and union membership has changed. The rank and file movements of today are also different. But, as in earlier years, these groups of militants spring up over grievances, discriminatory practices, unjust interpretation of contract provisions, etc. The elementary lessons from such experiences may lead to a more permanent grouping and a program of wider scope.

There is no set form or policy blueprint for rank and file groups. They vary with the type of problems, the degree of readiness of the workers to organize in such groups and the type of union they are in.

A broad movement that would strive to unite the rank and file groups of various unions into a national movement would of neces-

sity have to take the approach that it is up to the groups of their respective unions to decide what's good for their fellow workers in facing shop and union problems. It could unite the different groups only for the general *progressive* advances of the labor movement that applies to all workers in all unions. That was the approach of the Rank and File Conference in Chicago June 27-28, 1970, attended by more than 900 persons from unions and rank and file groups across the country. They set up the National Coordinating Committee for Trade Union Action and Democracy, with headquarters in Chicago.

The Chicago conference demonstrated how many such groups, from many industries and unions, can be nearly unanimous on the broad common issues. They approved a statement of purposes and a program to work for peace and immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Indochina; to fight racism in all its forms and for full equality for black, Spanish-speaking and Indian peoples; for political action independent of the two old parties although recognizing that a new people's party would be premature in 1970; for revitalization of the trade unions and for assertion of the rights of the members in making decisions; for defense of the rights of young workers and greater attention to the rights of women who work. Also common to all groups in the conference was the members' stress on militancy and initiatives.

The National Coordinating Committee is not set up to impose discipline or deal rigidly with its groups. Each group relies on its own judgment in implementing the program in its own area. But the greatest significance of what the conference did is that for the first time in many years such a gathering took place and united in a general approach to revitalize, democratize and activate the trade unions of America.

The key word for those advanced enough to be associated with a rank and file movement is "Our." The starting point is that "it is OUR union," or we must "make it OUR union," and "OUR labor movement." That's what the rank and file struggle is all about.

A union member has to be taught there is more to union obligations than payment of dues for "services." A union member should take part in the union's work *because it is his or her union*. Unfortunately, millions of trade unionists have no more relation to their union than the dues check-off figure on their pay envelope. Little wonder that so many workers regard their union as an insurance company.

We are concerned with a vast movement, the biggest union federation in the capitalist world, with 19 million members, 2 million black, four million of them women. There are in the U.S., in and out of the AFL-CIO, 76,000 local unions. They have a total of 140,-

000 collective bargaining agreements, covering 20 million workers. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Directory of Labor Unions)

Below we treat briefly a number of questions that usually come up in relation to rank and file groups. They don't exhaust the list by a long way.

Some Questions

Is the rank and file group an arm of a political party? Certainly not. It must not be if its influence is to be wide enough to be effective. There are no political demarcation lines among workers interested in the problems that make a rank and file group necessary. A political designation would narrow the group to only those who favor it and alienate other militant progressives. Marxists and others in the traditional left naturally expect that progress in rank and file activity would eventually encourage workers to be closer to the left. But that is strictly in the realm of patient education and experience, not of pressure or obligation.

A rank and file group or movement is really a united front of militant progressively inclined workers in a given union or shop, including Communists and others on the left and many, possibly most, who don't consider themselves left. Some may be associated with various political groups in the "Left." The problem is to keep that united front together. That can be done if the limits of the united front are respected. Violations of those limits, by injection of issues upon which many may disagree, inevitably leads to a breakup or loss of much support for the group. A continued united front relationship can lead to a higher level and more advanced issues, but that cannot be achieved by pressure. It can only come by a test of unity in struggle, a cultivation of mutual confidence, patient effort and dialogue.

The Chicago conference, for example, rejected the resolution of some ultra-leftists to commit the movement to a labor party now, and no support of any old party candidates. The conference said it favored a new party and would work for it in principle, but, noting that such a party was not in the cards in 1970, it declared its support of any Democratic or Republican candidates who merit it by the records on domestic and Vietnam issues. This position preserved the unity of all militant progressives there irrespective of their politics now.

Must the rank and file movement be "revolutionary," as some in the left say it should be? It cannot be what some call "revolutionary" and be effective, because even the most advanced rank and file groups seek to base themselves on a program for progressive reforms within the present labor movement and for more militancy

for better working and living conditions. That type of group needs mass support, but only a comparative handful of workers willing to be "revolutionaries" would join or associate with a group that sets "revolution" for its goal. The continual harping by the assorted ultra-leftists that the rank and file groups must be "revolutionary" only lends ammunition to the witchhunters and the labor bureaucracy who always try to paste a red label on such movements to crack their unity.

Is the rank and file an "opposition" movement? No. It is first of all a movement to make the union a more effective force and works to rally the support of the members for everything the union undertakes that is in the interest of the workers. It is in opposition to reactionary union officials, or to any group or clique within the union that works against the interests of the workers. Some rank and file groups lose much of their potential effectiveness because they confine themselves to opposition to the reactionary leaders in office. This gives them a negative image—as people who are *only against* certain officers and policies. A good rank and filer must first of all be seen as a good union member—an active member, who volunteers for the union's activities, accepts work on committees, distributes leaflets, responds to picket duty and organizing work and is an activist in all respects. Most union members pay little attention to criticism of the union's officers or to proposals if they come from persons not identified with the union actively.

Is union democracy anti-leadership? By no means. Some who profess to speak for the "New Left" sound off loudly for some sort of abstract democracy in unions and call for a "self-acting" membership. This is nonsense that can come only from persons unfamiliar with the life of unions or any organizations. No organization can function without leadership. The real issue that concerns the rank and file movement is the kind of leaders elected and whether they are chosen *democratically*. Some ultra-leftist elements, responding to anarchist influence, oppose all leadership. But election of honest and progressive leaders is just one aspect of the problem. It is no less essential to have a democratic life in the entire union organization so that such leaders can both serve well and hold their positions. This demands reforms in a union's life to insure democratic procedures and rank and file control in all important matters. And it calls for a vigorous campaign by the union to get a maximum of membership participation in the union's regular meetings and other affairs.

In recent years there has been a frightful drop in the degree of membership participation. Unions with thousands of members frequently don't get a quorum of 50 or 100 required for a membership meeting. Many bureaucrats are pleased with this trend because

they need only a few of their minions and paid people to carry a meeting for anything they desire. They don't try hard to make meetings attractive, educational and democratic to raise attendance. On top of that, they often blame the members for alleged lack of interest.

Are rank and file groups needed in progressive-led unions? They certainly are needed, if for no other reason than to help keep the union progressive. But strange as it may seem, progressives in union leadership are often heard arguing that there is no need of a rank and file group because "you have me." This argument is based on the false premise that a rank and file group is only an opposition to leaders. The group is not seen as, first of all, a movement in support of all positive activities of the union and progressive leaders. Secondly, the history of the labor movement is full of the many situations in which progressives in leadership felt themselves so strong on their record that they neglected, or even opposed, steps to organize rank and file support, only to be surprised one day by defeat at the polls. No progressive-led union is free of reactionary conspiracies or treachery. Thirdly, if a rank and file movement of constructive militant progressives isn't organized, the vacuum is sure to be filled by a phony ultra-leftist "rank and file" that reactionaries usually encourage because it helps pave the way for a right wing take-over. Fourthly, progressive officials are not immune to criticism. A rank and file is very much needed to keep them on a progressive track.

Can the racism issue be subject to "tactical expedience?" As the rank and file movement widens, its groups expand relationships with others in a union or shop in internal union elections, contract demands and other issues. At times compromises are inevitable in the interest of such united fronts. But no rank and file group can be true to itself and compromise on racism as a "tactical expedient." Even the most moderate of the rank and file groups has the primary task of combatting racism, advancing equality through black-white slates in union elections or promoting blacks to higher skills. There can be no equivocation on racism any more than on company unionism, strikebreaking and anti-union espionage.

Equivocation on racism would spell death to a rank and file group. This is no longer an issue on which there is ignorance. Workers who take half a step in a progressive direction know that what's involved is the key issue of unity against oppression of an important section of the working class.

Henry Winston, chairman of the Communist Party, underscoring Marx's famed postulate that "labor in a white skin can never be free so long as labor in a black skin is branded," wrote "it is mere chatter to talk about trade union consciousness developing into

class consciousness and advancing to socialist consciousness, if there does not exist a conscious, unending struggle against racism. No worker can be said to be class conscious who does not recognize the community of interests of all workers as a class. And for white workers this means first of all recognition of the community of their interests with those of Black workers and therefore of the need to fight for the right of Black workers." ("Fight Racism—For Unity and Progress!", Henry Winston, New Outlook Publishers, New York, 1971, p. 2)

What is the rank and file attitude to labor unity? Unity in struggles has been the watchword since the inception of the working class movement. The need for unity is greater today than it has ever been since Marx and Engels wrote in their Communist Manifesto of 1848 the ringing words "Workers of the World unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to gain."

The worker learns the meaning of unity from the time he senses the advantage of association with other workers on the job. That unity escalates from the shop level to a national scale, to industry-wide unions, industry-wide strikes and, at times as in the case of the 1969-70 General Electric strike, a nationwide solidarity support by labor organizations with 19 million members. Currently there is discussion in sections of the world labor movement for steps towards possible world-wide unity of unions with 200,000,000 members.

Unity is not something abstract, however. Workers unite for a purpose—to curb inhuman working conditions, to defeat giant conglomerates, to combat the international monopolies more effectively, to struggle for peace. It is for action on such objectives that workers unite.

To some people, however, unity has another meaning. George Meany and his associates in AFL-CIO leadership shout for unity because to them it means mainly the submission of all sections of the labor movement to their policies.

The leaders of the 18 building trades unions of the AFL-CIO consider it a terrible breach of "unity" when rank and file workers denounce their plan to deny the members the right to ratify a contract before it takes effect; or when Black Coalition demonstrators protest against the rules that keep black and other minority groups out of the trades. To Meany the departure of many AFL-CIO unions from his pro-war policy is a breach of unity. The hypocrisy of the unity approach of some labor leaders was well illustrated by the refusal of the AFL-CIO leaders even to reply to the ALA's call for a joint action agreement to combat anti-labor attacks.

The task of the rank and file movement is to give meaning to unity; to insist that it be a weapon for action.

Do world affairs belong in a local union? For many years, when issues related to international relations, to war or peace, were raised in a local union meeting, conservative leaders and their backers were sure to shout that such matters were not in the province of the local. As we showed in earlier chapters, this cry in effect meant, "Let George (Meany) do it," because all such matters were confined to the inner sanctums of the AFL-CIO's international affairs department directed by Jay Lovestone, long the CIA's man in labor.

In the recent period this approach, so convenient to the labor bureaucracy, has been shattered. Peace has become recognized as the bread and butter question by millions of union members. So is the menacing role of international corporations. There is more and more talk in shops and locals of world affairs and their relation to the worker's pay envelope, job security and his family's future. A rank and file movement that does not press these issues at union meetings is simply not up to the times. The members of unions need to be reminded occasionally that it is time to open the doors of the International Affairs chambers of the AFL-CIO and fumigate them of the stench of CIA and similar relations.

What is the rank and file attitude to union election contests? In the unusual number of challenges in union elections in recent years, many officials long entrenched in local, regional and even national office, have been toppled or almost toppled. Not all such contests are due to a rank and file movement. Many are due to rifts in the top bureaucracy, power struggles, or to issues that are far short of a progressive program. But at least to a certain degree they reflect dissatisfaction among the workers. This encourages all types of opposition. There have also been an unusual number of voluntary retirements and acceptance of an "emeritus" status by union heads who sensed difficulty in getting re-elected.

The undercurrent that has made many old line labor officials uneasy is the rising percentage of younger persons in industries; a faster retirement rate; entrance of many from campuses into shops; the resentment against official union support of the Vietnam war; slowness of unions to respond to new issues—widespread racism, male supremacy, etc., etc.

The 1968 election in the steel union that gave Emil Narick, an unknown who opposed incumbent president I. W. Abel, 41 percent of the ballots was the most notable of the recent such cases. Another was the defeat of James B. Carey in the contest for the International Electrical Workers Union presidency, because the workers resented his kowtowing for years to General Electric.

In the big Retail Clerks International Association, James Suffridge chose to retire from the presidency when an opposition

movement developed, headed by some of the union's top leaders. The candidates Suffridge backed won, but the opposition went to the courts, unsuccessfully, to challenge the ballot count.

A similar challenge to the administration of Joseph Curran of the National Maritime Union, by a rank and file movement, also landed in the courts where a new election was ordered.

In all the above cases, the leaders who faced contests have been or still are, members of the AFL-CIO executive council. The contests are even more widespread at the local levels. In Painters, District Council 9, New York, the long-established rank and file movement in coalition with others, ousted a reactionary and corrupt regime that held power for 18 years. In the United Mine Workers the candidacy of Joseph Yablonski (later murdered) for the union's presidency against W. A. Boyle was the first such serious contest against the union's bureaucracy since the twenties. Yablonski actually drew a majority of the vote of the working miners. Boyle, in a maneuver jointly with the mine owners to raise the monthly pensions, sought the pensioners' votes.

Rank and file groups strive to advance progressive tickets in union elections. But they cannot be indifferent to opposition candidates initiated by others. The rank and file can arouse interest in the key issues that can influence the course of such campaigns, bring forward the rank and file program, and build its own group.

Where is the rank and file day-to-day concentration? It is at the lower level, in the shops and local unions where the daily problems arise and where the workers learn the ABCs of unionism and struggle. Experience shows that frequently it is on the so-called "small" issues that the rank and file may be most appreciated by the workers. Many of the "wildcats" explode over what some people think are trivial matters. These are not unimportant if workers are willing to lose worktime and pay over them.

How does the rank and file view the shop steward machinery? The shop steward setup is, or should be, the heart of the union. The shop stewards are the people who have a direct contact with the workers and have most to do with the enforcement of the contract and maintenance of some control over speedup and other inhuman work conditions. The big corporations are well aware of the key role of stewards. For that reason they try to make them as ineffective as possible through pressure to spread the steward's responsibility over a larger number of workers—200, 250 and even more. They also make the task of settling grievances as frustrating as possible for the steward, so unsettled issues pile up, dissatisfaction mounts, and the blame is often directed at the steward and union. Eventually a wildcat is the only recourse. Some unions have contracts that provide a steward for every 25 or 30 workers. This not

only makes possible better attention to grievances but also increases the number of participants in the union's work.

But whatever the arrangement, it is the kind of workers elected for the job that makes the difference. They can be rank and file, spirited, militant, elected democratically and having the confidence of the workers; or they can be appointees of bureaucratic officials who count upon them to be loyal supporters of the administration and their policy of playing ball with management.

How does the rank and file regard the high salaries of officials? Strong opposition is advisable to high salaries, especially to the current trend of super-high salaries that run as high as \$100,000 a year for a certain president. Contrary to the arguments that high salaries are a "safeguard" against corruption, they are in themselves a corruptive influence. They not only affect the top man in the bureaucracy but the salary schedules in the union's apparatus down to the local level. Every time the president's salary is raised, the salaries of other officials are raised in about the same proportion. The effect of the system is a continuous campaign of the lower officials for increases for the president because "he is worth as much as the corporation president" on the other side of the table.

Unfortunately even some progressives in trade union ranks forget the old rank and file principle that officials of unions should not receive much above what the most skilled workers in the trade get. For some years there was a rationale among some progressives that the high salaries of certain officials should be overlooked for the sake of a friendly relationship with them. Such neglect of the once popular issue of rank and file movements in the struggle against bureaucracies has allowed the trend for salary increases to run wild. Curran, heading a union of some 35,000 members, gets more than \$90,000 annually. There are some locals that pay their president \$40,000 and \$50,000 a year.

The current lethargic state in the head offices of many unions demands rank and file initiative on an endless number of problems that either have not been touched for decades or were never regarded as problems for a union. Rank and file groups should be spark plugs for such initiatives. To touch on a number of likely issues:

Education. Few unions have an education department, and if they do it usually consists of one person who does research for bargaining purposes or arranges occasional seminars of local union officers and stewards on the union's routine. But there is little serious study of union history, economic analysis, politics in depth and working class internationalism.

Participation. What can be done to improve membership participation in the union's affairs, in the first place attendance at meet-

ings? How to involve the majority of the members who don't even live in town? Those questions don't worry officers, but the rank and file can hardly expect to make much headway on any issues unless more members are involved in union affairs.

The union paper. The U.S. union press is estimated to go to 20 million homes. Those papers are sent to all enrolled members. But if the worker had to pay for his union paper, the circulation would be a tiny fraction of the 20 million. These papers hardly invite reading. Good journalism and the lifting of the dead hand of the administration, could make a difference, as a handful of good labor journals show. But no small factor is the extent of rank and file participation in making the journals worth reading through what they put into it in the form of their complaints and free discussion of problems. The rank and file groups can bring pressure for such labor papers.

Child care. Now that legal obstacles have been removed to inclusion of provisions in contracts for employer financing of child care centers for the working mothers, there is need for pressure on the unions to fight for such provisions. This is also a key to more involvement of women in the unions.

Recreation. No labor movement in the world is so barren of sport and recreation activities and facilities as is the U.S. labor movement. The field has been traditionally left to paternalistic employers, churches or to the capacity of a worker's pocketbook. Only one union, the ILGWU, operates a substantial summer resort with a capacity for 1,000. Here and there some local has a limited facility or small resort for a few members. Here's a tremendous field for rank and file initiative.

Senior members. The tremendous rise of the number of retired members is causing many unions to consider ways to keep them organized and close to the union. Large numbers of the retired resent being sidetracked and forgotten. They appreciate it if the organization they built still wants to use their experience and knowledge. One of the most attractive and productive locals of District 65, New York, is its senior members' local. The UAW has a national organization of the retired members counting 200,000. But most unions just honor their retired at an occasional function, or perhaps arrange a room where they can gather for a game of cards or checkers. This is a waste of valuable forces for the labor movement and does an injustice to those who sacrificed so much to build it. This is especially true today when large numbers retire (as in the UAW) before age 65. The rank and file can do much in this field.

Union library. As on education, there are few cases where unions promote what might be called (with much reservation) a workers'

library. The UAW and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers have a mail-order sales division of published books they consider of some value to the members. It need hardly be added, however, that their catalogues reflect political prejudice. There is a notable absence of publications of the left. In some rare cases a union may have a lending library. There is really a need of union promotion of labor literature because in most public libraries such literature is either on the forbidden list or obtainable with difficulty.

Students. Hardly a union has to go very far to get to a college campus. Recent developments point up the need and the good possibilities for a student-labor-faculty alliance. During the GE strike students gathered at many campuses and marched to the neighboring struck plants to join the pickets, or help the strikers with collection of funds and food. A giant student-labor demonstration at New York's City Hall in May, 1970, was the answer to the disgraceful beating of student peace demonstrators on Wall St. by "hard hats" of some building trades unions. Unions could have joint seminars with students and exchanges of visits.

The list of such possibilities can be very much longer. No doubt, with the advance of the National Coordinating Committee for Trade Union Action and Democracy set up at the Chicago conference June 27-28, the initiatives of the many rank and file groups will also come. As that committee's guideline in its statement of purpose declares:

"We are a movement *in* the labor movement. We exist to help build, strengthen and unify it, to help defend it from attacks of the Nixon Administration and Big Business, to help democratize the trade unions through the elimination of racism in all forms and by supporting maximum control over the affairs of the unions by the membership.

"We are unalterably opposed to dual unionism or anything else that divides or weakens the labor movement. We are unalterably opposed to the anarchistic idea of being against all leadership as a matter of principle. Leadership is essential at all times, and especially in these times of crisis. Our movement adds a new dimension to labor leadership which is sorely needed now: leadership from the work-bench which strengthens the hand of every labor leader who consistently stands with the rank-and-file. We do oppose and criticize certain policies of some leaders which do not accord with the interests of the rank-and-file. In so doing we exercise the democratic prerogative which is the inherent right of the membership. No labor leaders who stand with the rank-and-file need fear our movement. We have no axe to grind. We exist solely in the interests of the needs of the

membership and our purpose is to bring our unions up to that standard in every way possible, from top to bottom.

"The rank-and-file is the labor movement. There can be no revitalization of the trade unions without the involvement of the membership. Organized labor cannot decisively defeat the corporation anti-labor offensive without bringing the power of its million-fold membership into motion. This means the labor movement must move. This is our aim: to move our unions into effective action in defense of the best interests of the entire membership."

The Redbaiting Weapon

Why have progressive rank and file groups been historically redbaited? Since the earliest days of the labor movement of the United States, redbaiting has been a major weapon of the anti-union forces. The tactic of painting labor militancy and progressive activists as "reds" has been used for a half century or longer before the founding of the Communist Party of the United States in 1919. Philip S. Foner in his "History of the Labor Movement of the United States" gives many such examples. On Dec. 11, 1873, a mass meeting in New York called by the trade unions to demand real relief for the starving unemployed during the long depression of that day raised slogans like "Work, Not Charity." *The New York Times* condemned those slogans as "decidedly communistic," wrote Foner.

During the great 1877 railroad strike when federal troops were used for the first time to break a labor struggle, the *New York World*, commenting on tensions in the Pittsburgh area (July 22) said the workers were dominated by the "devilish spirit of Communism." The Erie Railroad of New York called the leader of the strike a "dangerous character who holds and disseminates communistic views," reported the *World*. Another comment heard from public officials and editorial writers was that the strike was an "insurrection, a revolution, an attempt by Communists and vagabonds to coerce society, and endeavor to undermine American institutions." Another typical cry of "communism" came from the *Scranton Republican* (Aug. 6, 1877) that screamed the strike leaders were Socialists from "the old World" who sought to overthrow the government and set up "An American Commune."

Thus the redbaiting technique, hardly changed in a century, ran on and on. The technicians of redbaiting are guided, first, by the time-honored strategy of directing fire at the most active and staunchest fighters of a movement; second, by the belief that such fire can take the vitality out of a movement by isolating its best leaders and activists; third, by the effort to inspire division in the ranks along ideological lines; fourth, by the approach that such

redbaiting propaganda must always be kept alive to condition the atmosphere for frameups of active progressives as plotters against the government, "foreign agents" and such.

The frameup system has been institutionalized in the United States since the first unions came on the scene. We saw it in the Molly Maguire miners execution of the seventies; in the Haymarket case hangings in Chicago in the midst of the great eight-hour movement of the eighties; in the Haywood, Moyer, Pettibone case in Idaho in 1892; in the conviction of Tom Mooney on a phony bombing charge as hysteria was being built up to get into World War I; in the Sacco-Vanzetti executions during the post-war hysteria; in the Palmer anti-communist raids in 1920; in the persecution and jailing of many Communists and other leftwing leaders since then, climaxing in the convictions and jailing of Communist leaders in many states during the McCarthyite period for violation of laws that have since been declared basically unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

As the United States was entering its imperialist era at the turn of the century, another element entered into the technology of redbaiting. The top bureaucracy of labor around Samuel Gompers lent blanket support to that policy in false expectation that capitalism and its government would reciprocate with some kindness towards the trade unions at home. It is that relationship that more than any other factor influenced the extreme bureaucratization of most U.S. unions, because it became necessary to club the members into line for support of such policies. After World War I this policy became in a major sense the support of the war against the "red manace." The Gompers leadership, followed by William Green's and eventually George Meany's, was far in front of all other reactionary groups in helping to keep alive an anti-red hysteria.

Anti-communism, incorporated into the old AFL and later the AFL-CIO's constitution, has more in view than a partnership with the U.S. government on foreign, imperialist, policy. Anti-communism has been useful to the bureaucracy for decades as a weapon against even moderate critics who challenge national or local union administrations. Racketeers, gangsters and all sorts of discredited union officials have often been returned to office by use of the red-scare weapon.

Coalitions of Communists and others on the left felt the full brunt of the red-scare strategy during the early twenties, with the emergence of the Trade Union Educational League under the leadership of William Z. Foster that won wide support for industrial unionism,

independent political action, union democracy and a cleaning out of racketeering. The twenties were marked by left led strikes in many fields, including the South, in defiance of the AFL policy of submission to the open shoppers. Redbaiting became even more intense in the thirties when Communists led the movement of unemployed, for unemployment insurance, social security and cash relief. Redbaiting was whipped up to a white heat in the later thirties as the Left showed its dynamic role in building the new Congress of Industrial Organizations and the broad anti-fascist front. The Dies Committee, later known as the House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC) was created to single out progressives and either show they were Communists or label them as "red." The high point of that trend came a decade later when the CIO leadership was bludgeoned into the cold war and forced to expel unions with a million members for alleged "Communist" leadership. (See "The Red-baiting Racket," 1947, and "Conspiracy to Strangle Labor," 1951, by George Morris).

The trade union movement is still paying heavily for that costly lesson of anti-communism and for the integration of the AFL-CIO's international affairs with the CIA. After a generation of stagnation, even some moderate voices admit that the process that began with the purge of Communists expanded into a purge of progressives in general and drained the unions of vitality.

Far from abandoning the redbaiting weapon, the Meany bureaucracy is trying to raise it again to the level practiced by Joe McCarthy. Meany, at his Aug. 25, 1970, press conference at which he attempted to swing his group to the Nixon-Agnew forces, discovered that "the Democratic Party has disintegrated," "almost has become the party of extremists insofar as these so-called liberals or new lefts, or whatever you want to call them, have taken over the Democratic Party. As they take over and move more and more to the left—and I mean way over to the left—I think more and more are going to lose the support of our members." (AFL-CIO Publicity Department's transcript)

The Democratic Party is a political arm of capitalism, as is the Republican. But why did Meany, who has always led the federation in support of the Democrats and has been sharply critical of the Nixon domestic policy, suddenly discover that "new lefts" had taken over the Democrats. Because most of the men in Congress who have been critical of Nixon's Indochina policy, or have swung recently to the opposition, come from the Democrats. To Meany, anti-communism and perpetuation of a war on communism

are decisive and outweigh all the acts and policies of the Nixon administration harmful to the interests of the unions and to all the common people. His McCarthyite blunderbuss is really directed at those in Congress who oppose Nixon's war policy. As the record shows, they are basically the bloc in Congress that usually supports labor-backed social-economic legislation.

Shortly after that press conference, Spiro Agnew departed for a congressional campaign tour, with his main pitch the "Meany line"—an appeal to union men to vote against the "radical" Democrats.

Through the history of the progressive, rank and file movements in the trade unions, those in their ranks who are guided by Marxism and who have their eyes on basic goals, towards a new social order, socialism, have always been the most steadfast in struggle. Marxists view every struggle, whether for a minor or major reform, as both necessary for immediate relief and as education and unification for the kind of militant class consciousness the workers need to eventually effect a basic change in the social system.

There are, of course, many rank and file movements without Marxists. But they are seldom sustained long because they usually break up after success or failure of the issue that brought the group into existence. But Marxists never stop. They always drive on, raise higher goals and strive for ever broader united fronts. That is why the presence of Marxists in rank and file groups is essential for their continuance and for their programmatic progress.

In line with such experience and tradition, Gus Hall, Communist Party general secretary, wrote in *Political Affairs* of August, 1970, on the Chicago Rank and File Conference of June 27-28:

"The delegates represented the very best that there is in our trade unions, the very best of the working class forces. They were the most militant and the most articulate—the leaders of a new rank and file of labor.

"One of the most significant features of the rank and file movement has been the growing unity between the black, Chicano, Puerto Rican and white workers. This is class unity that is being hammered out and steeled in the fires of sharpening class struggle. This new unity is growing to the extent that the white workers are shedding influences of racism as they discover it is a tool of the employers. This new unity grows because the black workers reject the concept of separatism. . . . It is significant that all attempts to create division were rejected."

As we showed in these pages, much has changed in the labor movement in recent years. Many non-Communists have discovered the frightful cost of playing the "red-scare" racket. Many have advanced to a realization that redbaiting is a divisive weapon that runs side-by-side with racism and anti-Semitism. The effectiveness of the technique is diminishing, although reactionaries in and out of the labor movement will not stop trying to use this weapon. Nor will the disruptive ultra-leftist group give up their sniping at all united fronts and coalition movements that include the Marxist left.

The most important development of the recent period has been a rising rebellious sentiment against labor leaders who still try to turn off the members through the old divisive ways and evade the real problems, like a living wage, peace, job security, eradication of racism, need of more youth and freshness in the unions, more democracy and a rank and file say in union affairs. As one young black hospital worker from Charleston, South Carolina, told the 1969 convention of the AFL-CIO, "They will not turn us around."

About the book

Why the growing rebellion of rank and file workers against both employers and the top bureaucracy in many unions? This book examines the reasons, and more: it is a challenge to the bureaucracy and conservatism in labor. It develops new goals for the labor movement. The book discusses:

The class collaborationism of most labor leaders vs. the class struggle approach—new technology, multinational monopolies and the changing workforce—political action trends—new legislative objectives—capitalism and living standards—threats to unions—problems of Black liberation and unions—the racist menace—labor, youth, and intellectuals—working women and labor—international relations and the peace movement.

Examined in depth is the state of the working class movement today—the AFL-CIO, its policy, strength—the Alliance for Labor Action—the “New Lefts”—the old “leftists”—Marcuse’s philosophy—the Communist position—the newly rising Rank and File movements—including a chapter of questions and answers.

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